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COMMENT,

ON

DANTE

ITALY:

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A COMMENT

ON THE

DIVINE COMEDY

OF

DANTE ALIGHIERI.

BY. . . . . .

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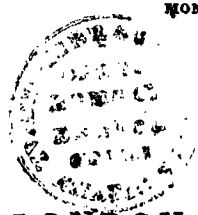
VOL. I.

S-61

Nous avons bien plus de poëtes, que de juges et interpretes de poésie.

MONTAIGNE.



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PREFACE

It is perhaps difficult to find a subject in English on which some one has not already written. Yet a commentator on Dante has this advantage; and may fearlessly tell his reader 'use my book until you can find a better.' To a man who has reason to be diffident, such is no small encouragement. A long residence in Italy (I have lived in it for several years and am likely to continue) and many consequent facilities might render me fitter for my undertaking than my competitors, if I had any; and I am entirely unconscious of having any. My undertaking is a detailed comment on the DIVINA COMMEDIA — a work that embraces a greater variety of matter, than any other poem that has been ever written. The Iliad and Odyssey and the Aeneid have been commented over and over again in a great many languages; and to whatever extent those comments were perfect, or imperfect, the world has always received them willingly, and looked to them

with some degree of curiosity. It were not strange then, if England were desirous of having (what it has not) a full comment on a production which affords much more scope for one, and to which one is far more necessary, than any Greek or Latin poem whatever. My object is not to give a verbal explanation of the text; for this will be found in any version of it with which my comment may be read — in the notes, if it be read with an Italian copy; and in the notes and the paraphrase of a translation, if read with a translation in French, German, Latin, English, or any language. An historical, philosophical, critical elucidation of my author's sentiments, allusions, and intentions is what I propose — an attempt to render not his words, but their purpose and full signification; which opens a wider, and on many occasions a more unexplored field, than may be imagined: for it necessarily takes in a quantity of facts and opinions either much mis-represented, or nearly forgotten — the history, religion, and science of the fairest and then the most civilized portion of Europe, Italy, during one of the most interesting periods of her annals; from the birth of the Florentine republic, up to its highest pitch of prosperity and the beginning of its decline; from the first,

seeds of the Guelphs and Ghibellines and the *Blacks* and *Whites*, up to the utter extinction of the two latter, and to what may be considered the end of the rivality between the former; — from the first dawnings of letters, up to the completion of what Italians still consider as the most glorious effort, the polar star of their entire literature; so that the productions of Petrarch and Boccaccio seem but the satellites that shine brightly in its train. Nor should the reader think that all this is a matter which has been developed by others: for the different works, historical or literary, to which he may recur, have too lengthened a way before them to allow of their delaying on the same topics more than more or less cursorily; whereas I attach myself entirely unto the chief of the celebrated Tuscan Triumvirate, and have no other pretension than that of laying fairly open all the matters of which he wrote, or in which he is known to have borne part — so that my task closes in 1321, or previous to Petrarch and Boccaccio becoming illustrious in the world. Yet is that task, though so circumscribed as to time, sufficiently, and more than sufficiently momentous. To give the substance of the multitudinous Italian comments and treatises on Dante, many of them in print and some in

M. S. — to reconcile their opinions where they jar, and, particulary, correct the modern by the ancient — to clear their literal interpretations, and often interesting remarks and recitals, from the ocean of allegory in which they are so immersed, as to be, for the most part, unapproachable by ordinary readers — to say all they say that is worth knowing, and much that they do not say, by inquiring more closely into the foundation of Dante's ethical and political system — and to inweave with all this constant citations from his minor works, so that one shall at length become completely familiar with them, without the necessity of actual perusal; which would perhaps be impossible, from the very old-fashioned, I may add quaint, style in which they are frequently dressed — is a subject not deficient certainly in extent or in materials. To even an Italian there is matter in this comment not to be found in any other. I am the first of Dante's commentators who treat of his oriental acquirements. The explanation of Arabic and Hebrew verses (which hitherto passed for nonsense) and of many words from the same sources (whose meanings, as well as roots, were never before ascertained) renders this comment richer than any Italian one; nor is there vanity in my saying so. For

such knowledge I am indeed indebted to an Italian (the learned Abate Lanci, public Professor of oriental tongues at Rome); but his observations have only appeared in a small pamphlet, so that this English comment will be the first one to do justice to Dante in that respect. It will be the fault of my execution, (and not of the plan) if this work fail to be interesting, not merely to students of Dante, whether in the original or in a translation, but even to such as never perused, or intend to peruse the DIVINE COMEDY, but love desultory reading. The variety, shortness, and independence of its articles (if they were well executed) would render it as fit to be taken up, and thrown down, and taken up again, as Montaigne's essays themselves, or even those treatises of Plutarch and Seneca of which he says: Il ne fault pas grande entreprise pour m'y mettre, et les quitte où il me plaist; car elles n'ont point de suite et dependance les unes aux aultres (Liv. 2. chap. 10.). I suppose no one will be so ungenerous, as to suspect me of presuming to compare myself with Montaigne; except merely as to the unconnected nature of the parts of our compositions. There are few historical anecdotes to render a comment on ancient poetry interesting; for all that can ever be

known about the Greeks and Romans, has long become generally known: whereas much may be yet discovered from MSS. and rare, printed chronicles in Italy, which are scarcely known in Italy itself, far less in England. If Mr. Roscoe was able to throw light on so late and so enlightened an age as that of the Medici, it would merit small surprise if another *Oltremontano* could do so with regard to a period far remoter and less investigated. However curious a theme the Pagan mythology is, it has nothing (speaking merely humanly) to compete with Christianity. The Greek and Latin poets lead to a discussion on the former: but Dante to the latter also; for it can never be doubted but his creed (however some of its tenets be considered) contains the fundamental Christian dogmas; and has been more universally professed, than any other form of Christianity. In the Histoire des Républiques Italiennes some doubts are hazarded as to the political consequence of Dante; but these seem much more suggested by a desire of novelty, than a judicious survey of events. A great authority, — a nation's voice has long since decided the contrary; and even the historian himself affords manifest grounds for an opinion very different from his own, by showing that Dante had to

pay the severe mulct of the confiscation of all his property and outlawry for life for the part which he had taken in politics. Yet he was never minister to an Emperor, in whose archives his letters (like those of one of his predecessors, Pietro della Vigna) might have been preserved; nor ever condescended to become an avowed leader of any of the factions of the day, by whom his writings might have been enthusiastically treasured up. Scarcely half a dozen of his letters have come down to us; but these show, that he was in the habits of intimacy with great Potentates on every interesting question. To the Emperor, to the Cardinals, to the Republic of Florence, to the Lords of Verona, and of Ravenna, etc.— these were the persons to whom the few of his letters, or scraps of letters, which are extant were addressed. Neither Guelphs, nor Ghibellines, nor *Blacks*, nor *Whites* could look to him as an implicit adherent, but were alike most conscious that he was ready to oppose their sanguinary acts; the MONARCHIA, though written in defence of the temporal superiority of the Emperor, could not have obtained his assent, since it denied him an armed authority and (what was worse) a right to levy taxes on the Italian municipalities; and the Pope, although devotion to his

spiritual supremacy was most striking in Dante, could not forgive his opposition to his temporal pretensions: with all these more or less his foes, the wonder is not that so few traces of his political career remain, but that any of them do; and most extraordinary must his merits have been, who, depending on no faction at that factious period, could acquire universal reputation on his intrinsic worth alone. Nor do I speak of him as a *poet*. M. Sismondi is incorrect in stating that his *political* eminence was an exaggeration of after ages. He had barely expired, when that eminence was emphatically avowed in writings that are still in being: and it was, on the contrary, by those of after ages that it was called in question. When Boccaccio and his immediate predecessors and successors wrote, Dante's superiority as a Politician and Theologian was valued higher than as a poet; and for this, the spiritual parts of his works were explained in the churches, and the political in the public schools of Florence, Bologna, Pisa, Lucca — all the free republics of Italy. A slight sketch of his life may be a necessary preliminary to some, and no inconvenient one to most readers.

It was at a period when the Italian republics were in full possession of their boasted, though

insecure, feverish independence — when the sanguinary struggle between Guelphs and Ghibellines and the Imperial and Papal factions was at its height — ere the modern literature was begotten, or the ancient had emerged from the hiding-places of the monasteries — while the fine arts, under Cimabue, were rather in the very first state of embryo than of existence — it was during this chaos of society, in 1265, that the descendants of one of those old Roman families (the purest source from which any of our European nobility spring) who founded Fiesole, and, after its destruction, established themselves at Florence, produced a son, who was to have a wider and more beneficial influence over the world than any of his Latin ancestors ever had; for he was to give immediate birth to almost all arts and sciences, and to bring at least one of them (poetry) to a high point of perfection: a personage to whom mankind owes much, even in those improvements which appear to be of recent origin, and to whom it has never ceased, more or less, through so many successive centuries, to confess its debt of gratitude — DANTE ALIGHIERI. He was an eldest son, and had one brother and sister. How long his mother survived, is not known: but his father certainly died during

his boyhood. He had however for preceptor, Brunetto Latini; so that he received as good an education as was then to be had. His love of letters (which was so remarkable that he was known as an author, before he was ten years old) did not prevent his eager participation in the exercises and amusements of youth; so, that he was a good musician, swordsman, horseman, falconer, etc. He was a warm admirer of the fairest portion of creation; and the individual for whom he felt the passion of Love, in all its most romantic Platonic purity, continued inseparably linked with most of his thoughts, words and writings, from even his infancy up to his death; so that, with the mere exception of his political and grammatical treatises and his translations from the Bible, it were not easy to find a single composition of his, in which she is not either directly named, or implicitly hinted at; and in all his grand productions she occupies the first post of honor. She however died before he was twenty-six: and he was at last induced to marry, in order not to be wanting as a citizen. He was (like most young Florentines) brought up a soldier; and had already risen to a distinguished post ere the battle of Campaldino, in 1290. This however did not prevent his diplomatic career;

and, ere his thirty-second year, he had been sent on ten or twelve different embassies — not only to various Italian courts, but into Sicily and France. Through the different gradations of office, he at last was elected a Prior, or head magistrate of Florence, in 1300. He was then in his thirty-fifth year. Besides the Guelphs and Ghibellines, other sanguinary factions now appeared — the *Blacks* and *Whites*. These he endeavoured to restrain, but in vain: and the event was, that, on the *Blacks* becoming triumphant two years after, (by the aid of the Pope, and of a French army) Dante was ejected for ever from his native city. From that period, he continued rambling up and down Italy and France (once even he came into England); and at last died at Ravenna in 1321. His earliest productions were songs; in his youth he composed his Vita Nuova, which is a mixture of prose and verse: so that he had acquired high literary fame before commencing his great poem, THE DIVINE COMEDY. This he began between twenty and thirty, and had scarcely finished when he died: so it occupied above twenty years in the composition. While composing it, however, he was not only engaged in wars, politics, and travelling, but wrote a variety of minor works — a long treatise on

Italian grammar, the earliest of its kind; a book on politics, called De Monarchia; various Eclogues, and letters, and other productions either now wholly lost, or to be found in a very mutilated condition; these all in Latin: and in Italian — a philosophical comment named Il Convito; a translation of seven of the psalms and other religious pieces; and many letters and historical tracts of which very little is now extant. He left several children; all of whom emigrated from Florence, where their property had been confiscated; nor, when the republic offer'd to restore it to his descendants, could these be prevailed on to return; and at last his line became entirely extinct about the middle of the sixteenth century — the male branch of it; for there is a noble family which still continues (or at least did so, not long ago) to quarter his arms — a gold wing in a field of azure — with its own, on account of its descent from a female Alighieri. Dante's mortal remains still lie where he expired — in Ravenna: notwithstanding a negotiation which the Republic of Florence attempted, in order to obtain them, about twenty years after his death; as well as a still bolder attempt to the same purpose, made in the sixteenth century by no less men than Leo X and Michelangelo.

The Ravennati have hitherto treasured them with a jealous reverence that becomes both.

What secures Dante's fame now is his Divina Commedia. His other writings, more or less of a temporary nature, have fallen, or may fall a prey to Time: but this multifarious poem will not expire before all Italian letters become utterly extinct. For it not only is united with the birth of the history and language of one of the most noted people in the world, and is prized by them above every other product of their literature, but its subject is universally interesting — more so than that of Homer, and not less than Milton's. To much knowledge of the poetry and philosophy and religion of Antiquity, drawn from the Greek and Roman classics and the oriental writers, Dante added that of Mahometism and Christianity; and besides his own remarks and reflections in the character of a warrior, statesman, traveller, natural philosopher, etc. inserted those of the various remarkable men of his day, whether Italians, French, Germans, Spaniards, or Saracens; for there was scarcely one of them with whom he was not personally acquainted. The first great modern painter (Giotto) was his friend and left us his portrait. With Marco Polo, the earliest Modern who performed a fa-

mous voyage of discovery, Dante must have been intimately acquainted, and learned from his own mouth many things about the countries beyond the Line, which are not to be found in Polo's book. Some of Dante's observations — particularly regarding the antarctic pole — can be reasonably accounted for in no other way. Where he was taught his doctrine of gravity (whether by conversation with the Arabs or Spanish-moors, or by some of their writings not now known, or by his proper meditation) is a curious problem; but few are aware, how nearly he approaches Newton on the subject of the centripetal attraction of the Earth. To investigate these matters, and elucidate them, particularly by extracts from his minor works, is to be one great branch of this comment. Among the number of volumes lately produced on a subject that appears little interesting to *Oltremontani* (I mean the verbal war between the Tuscans and the Lombards) there is one that may interest generally. Its author, Count Perticari, is of a similar opinion to mine regarding the politics of Dante. Yet I never saw the Count's book, until I had written all that is written of my own; nor indeed till after this volume had gone to press. That two impartial men considering separately

on the same matter, should come to the same decision, is no small proof in its favour. Whatever I have said on Dante's uprightness and perspicacity as a statesman may now be considered as resting on much better authority than my own — on that of an Italian in high esteem among his countrymen, for manly sense, as well as elegant taste.

Of the Divina Commedia there are many translations in prose and verse. The one which least dissatisfies me, is the Latin version of Carlo D'Aquino. In English I am acquainted with two: although I did not know any thing of the existence of either, until very lately. With regard to one of them, it is unnecessary to notice it; for ramblingly paraphrastic, as it is, I believe, if the title-page were cut out and the book handed to me, I should not be aware it was intended for a translation of Dante. The other is indeed a very different production, I mean that of Mr. Cary. Its fidelity is exemplary; and though somewhat of a paraphrase, it is far from loose. But whatever be its *literal* merits, it does not give, nor pretend to give any of the melody of its Original. Dante writes in rhyme and in a metre whose chief characteristics are pliancy and concision. Mr. Cary in blank verse imitative of the stateliness and oc-

casional prolixity of Milton. Be it observed, that before Dante neither *terza rima* nor blank verse (versi sciolti) existed in Italian, though both now do; and Cesarotti, Alfieri, Parini, Bettinelli, etc. prove, that the latter is no less adapted to the genius of the language, than the former. Dante then might just as easily have invented *blank verse*, as terza rima; if there was not something in rhyme which pleased his ear more. He had begun his poem in Latin heroics, but soon changed both tongue and metre. Who knows how many metres he might have tried, before he decided for terza rima? His smaller poems display a variety of metres. Any of these, or blank verse were as easy an invention as terza rima. But in choosing this last, he, in my opinion, chose well; for no other seems capable of such variety — being alike proper for the highest and the lowest themes, and susceptible of every gradation of sound, to accompany each colour of eloquence, from rapid argument to playful imagery, from expanding tenderness to sarcasm and vehemence, from the sublimest simplicity to magnificence of description. Concision however is the chief peculiarity of Dante's style; even where he enters into descriptive details (which is rarely), his expressions are conciser, than those of any

other writer would have been on a similar occasion: no rhythm then is more unlike his than the Miltonic. Why then imagine that he would have selected it, had he written in English? He might have changed language, yet not ear. If we are to argue from analogy, it will not follow that because he prefer'd rhyme in his native tongue, he would blank verse in ours; and that he would choose in English, the metre most entirely dissimilar to the one he liked best in Italian. Before Lord Byron employed terza rima, it might have been objected that there was something in that fine metre not agreeing with the form of our language: but that doubt is now vanished. Perhaps Mr. Haley removed it before; but I cannot speak of his verses, having never seen them. But there is a far more ancient and higher authority for English terza rima than Mr. Haley — authority of which I was not aware till this very morning, the authority of the partial translator, and frequent imitator of Dante — Milton. His version of the second Psalm is in regular terza rima. But Prior and Pope are not more different in their manner, than Milton in his Paradise Lost and Dante in his Divine Comedy. I use the first names that occur, and not certainly intending to institute a comparison between Prior and

Dante. But there is nothing in our literature which conveys a specimen of the style of the Divina Commedia (for neither Mr. Haley's fragment, nor Milton's short Psalm is of extent enough to merit an exception) — at least there was none, until the PROPHECY OF DANTE; and even this is restricted to one feature of the Italian, its melancholy grandeur and force. In Dante's long poem there are vast varieties of scenes, speculations, personages, sentiments, etc. with which our noble countryman had nothing to do; yet with all these the Italian terza rima takes corresponding modulations, with wondrous flexibility.

Long before seeing Mr. Cary's translation, I had begun to attempt one conformably to the principles just disclosed. That translation of mine I have since suppressed: yet not until two Cantos were printed, as well as the comments on them. I mention this, to let the reader know to what the letters at the head of the Articles refer; as well as whence the extracts of translated passages, which are occasionally given, have been drawn. These extracts, it will be observed are in terza rima. To the impeachment of being in this an imitator of Lord Byron, I might plead guilty by being silent — conscious that it could only do me honor: but for the sake, not

of avoiding an accusation of meritorious imitation, but of truth, I must declare (what I am confident his Lordship will be equally ready to do) that my verses were composed, and, what have been printed of them, printed before his. Yet he was as totally unaware of their existence when he wrote; as I was of that of Mr. Haley's version, until informed of it by the Preface to the PROPHECY OF DANTE. Before seeing this, I was ruminating an apology for a novel metre. This necessity is now removed: and after such an example as Lord Byron, terza rima may be pronounced a measure as germain to us as any other. I, at best, could only have attempted to naturalize it; he has made it lineally our own. It is a metre, in which I tried some original compositions years ago; and the versification not appearing to displease those to whom I read them, I was emboldened to begin my translation of Dante in the same. But those compositions never left my port-foglio, nor shall. I have to apologize for the points in which my metre varies a little from that of Lord Byron's. The naked truth is best. About six years since, I turned five Cantos of Dante into precisely the same measure which is in the PROPHECY OF DANTE: but afterwards found it so heavy that I renounced it. The fault was possibly entirely my

own; but also I could not remedy it. Without troubling others, I meditated on the matter; and the consequence was, that I at last determined to allow myself the liberty of varying my lines from eight to ten syllables, instead of giving them all the fine heroic complement; as well as of using double rhymes at pleasure. Even his Lordship uses these. Dryden introduces a somewhat similar variety into his heroics by the free use of triplets and Alexandrines; which give a rich variety to his versification, that, at least to my ear, is more grateful than the regularity of Mr. Pope's couplets. With me, a full heroic line answers to the Alexandrine — this being a length which I never permit myself. Nor do I think the liberty I have thus assumed is equal to that which the Italian furnished to Dante — so superior is it to English in copiousness of rhyme and phrase and freedom of syntax. Yet were it otherwise, neither my Author's, nor his Lordship's genius is a rule for others. They might have been able to modulate a continuous English terzà rima of ten syllables with all the varieties of the Divine Comedy. I certainly could not: and the same reasons which made me leave off attempting it before I saw the PROPHECY OF DANTE, still subsist in full vigour.

Had no extracts from my version been inserted into my printed comments, I should not here have said any thing about it. But that was already irremediable — when I took the resolution to suppress my translation — at least the only remedy would have been the burning of two hundred pages of this edition of the Comment, which, I confess, I had no inclination to do. Those extracts however occur to small amount, save in the comments on the two first Cantos. As for the letters at the beginning of the Articles, they are at worst only a superfluity: should any one else ever translate the Divine Comedy, they may be a convenient reference; should my own translation one day see the light, a necessary one. Ere I had taken the resolution of suppressing it, my intention was to confine my critical observations in my comment to the French specimens of M. Ginguené, and the original Italian; deeming that English readers, having my translation in their hands, would follow what I consider the true interpretation. But now that it is determined otherwise, I must refer more particularly to the version which my readers, who are not sufficiently masters of Italian, will probably employ — that of Mr. Cary. He is, I believe, a fair antagonist; and I will meet him fairly.

After protesting (as I hereby most solemnly do) against his metre, its want of harmony, his paraphrases, and, in fine, all that appertains to style, as totally inadequate to convey the remotest resemblance to the poetry of his original — after doing this justice to my author once for all, I circumscribe my future observations on Mr. Cary to his *literal* pretensions; and here, it must be allowed, he is entitled to much encomium. Not that he always is so: or that there is a Canto in which there are not some inaccuracies. From the third Canto onward, these shall be noticed in my comments: but for the reason above alledged, they are not in the two first; so, to remedy such deficiency, let them be recapitulated here. In the first: I cannot but object to the very title, *Vision,* instead of that chosen by the author; and the more so, because Italians enumerate among the many reasons which induced him to call his book *Comedy,* the desire to avoid precisely such '*low common-place, as Journey, Vision, or the like*' — non volendo chiamare la sua opera Cammino, o *Visione, o con altro simile nome basso* (Gelli, sopra lo Inferno di Dante, vol. 1. p. 50.). In Mr. Cary's translation of verse xx of the original, he gives "recesses" instead of 'lake of the heart;' and thus not

only impairs the imagery of the passage, but removes what was intended to be a scientific position. Yet even the lines quoted from Redi might have emboldened one to be more literal. — v. xxx, Mr. Cary falls into the usual error of explaining it by, "in ascending the weight of the body rests on the hinder foot." — v. xliii, he makes a difficulty where there is really none. He in part remedies this by translating right; but his note (notwithstanding his encomiast) taxes his original with an obscurity, which it does not merit. — v. xlv, he falls into the common abuse of being strained, if not quite unintelligible, by interpreting the three beasts, Ambition, Luxury, Avarice. This, to be sure, is rather to be attributed to the commentators than to him; as his not giving any explanation of the allegorical forest, the sun-clad mountain, the pass 'that never left any one alive,' is rather a deficiency than defect: and if he gave no notes at all, such a deficiency would not deserve animadversion; and one might suppose that he fully comprehended the whole, though it was not in his plan to explain it to his readers. But as it is, I cannot conceive how he could clearly understand his original; and who without clearly understanding can translate clearly? The ci-

tation he gives from Jeremiah might have made him approach nearer the truth. — v. lxx, instead of either translating literally 'though late!' or, at least, paraphrasing it rightly, he makes a paraphrase which is in all probability a false one. — v. ci, he interprets the greyhound, Can of Verona, like the commentators, in which he and they may be correct; but the note which he adds is undoubtedly a mere error. When Dante wrote Can was a child, not a "liberal Patron." The prophecy *was* made after the event. So, Mr. Cary should have had too much veneration for the poet he selected to translate, not to pause before adopting an opinion injurious to his memory, that of representing him as the flatterer of a man who was feeding and insulting him. — v. cix, his mis-construction of the entire allegory leads him into the common difficulty of making Can chase avarice "through every town;" which, who can comprehend? — v. cxvii, by citing from Rev. ix. 6. he leads the reader into the mistake of asqribing to *second death* a signification which it does not, cannot bear, the Biblical one. — v. cxxxiv, he mis-interprets *S. Peter's gate* the gate of Purgatory, instead of Paradise. In the second Canto: v. ix, he is a little inaccurate in translating *nobilitate* "eminent endowments."

For thus he strictly limits the signification of *nobility* to one and indeed its higher sense; whereas it was probably intended to convey some, though a secondary reference to the birth-rights of its Author at the same time — an observation founded not only on the context of the whole of this poem, but on the aristocratic tone of all his works. — v. xciii, "*that* fierce fire." *Von*, etc. would be clearer: for it is necessary to show, that there was no painful fire where Virgil resided. — v. xciv, Donna gentil is made to mean *Divine Mercy;* without a notion of her having been a real lady. Yet without it; it were hard to enter into the spirit of the author. Who can well express what he does not feel? — v. cviii, it is an unreasonable deficiency not to have marked the true signification of the allegorical images "*death*" and "*torrent*" (fiumana): for it is not so obvious, that every reader may discover it. This observation were not made, had Mr. Cary no notes: but he has many that are mere superfluities, when compared with the necessary explanation of the text. It is to be recollected, Dante was well aware he needed interpretation; and wrote with the intention of commenting himself. — v. cxxiv, Mr. Cary calls the "three maids" *Divine Mercy*, *Lucia*, and *Beatrice;* an odd

jumble of fact and allegory. In all this, he seems not to have quite understood his original. — v. CXLII, he makes cammino alto e silvestro "*deep* and woody way:" it should be *steep*, etc. per *celsa* cacumina, as Aquino translates: for Dante's *descending* did not prevent the path from being steep.

Having enumerated what I conceive to be his defects (*considered merely literally*) and repeated, for the last time, my entire disapproval of his style throughout the whole poem, I do not hesitate to avow again that Mr. Cary's verbal fidelity is in general laudable. Had he written in prose, he might perhaps have been faithfuller to Dante's characteristic concision, and as much so to his various melody as blank verse can well be.

The drawings which I give from time to time, are mere sketches; that pretend to nothing beyond the explication of the text. Particularly as to the topography of Hell (a matter on which so much has been confusedly written) the pencil is occasionally an assistant almost necessary to the pen. With regard to such explanatory drawings, the editions of the Divina Commedia are very defective: not so, with regard to ornamental ones. Some have lately appeared in Italy embellished in a princely

style: but nothing can compare with what we have ourselves. The designs of Mr. Flaxman are of the noblest productions of art, and frequently display a sublime simplicity which is worthy of his great original. Indeed he, who is so able to transfer such creations from one fine art to another, seems of a mind but little inferior to his who could first conceive them. To borrow the words of an excellent Italian sculptor: 'Mr. Flaxman has translated Dante best; for he has translated him into the universal language of nature.'

In undertaking this comment, I am conscious of setting out on a very uncertain enterprize. Life, much less health, no one can calculate on. Yet with these and the encouragement of the public, I shall continue cheerfully. To solicit such encouragement, I send forth the present volume: if it be accorded, a second volume may quickly follow. Protection shall (at least as far mortal vicissitude authorizes a promise) produce attention.

COMMENT

ON

DANTE.

HELL,

PART THE FIRST.

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COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE FIRST.

A. verse I. (1)

Allegories enter more or less into every considerable poetic work: so, though I have no intention in this my comment of attempting to give more than my Author's obvious meaning, as well as I can, and not certainly of vying with the ingenious Commentators who explain this entire poem allegorically, I must begin by saying that the greatest part of this first Canto is a pure allegory. Without this warning it might appear so obscure, as to dishearten some from proceeding any further than the second or third page; but, bearing what I premise in mind, we shall soon find the allegory end and conduct us without confusion into the main subject, vindicating « the ways of God to man ». Dante, come to the middle of human life, finds himself still tossed about a gloomy forest, desert, or valley, from which however he descries a sunny mountain; and, endeavouring to ascend it, is impeded by three wild-beasts; to which he would

(1) The Capitals refer to the marginal notes; and the Roman figures to the verses of, not my translation but, the original Italian.

have fallen victim had it not been for the appearance of his master, Virgil; who proposes, as sole resource, that they should pass into the future world and take a view of what is passing there. This is literally the whole Canto; of which the allegory seems evidently: Dante, who at thirty five years of age found himself still, or rather more than ever, immersed in the turbulent politics of his Country, began to seek for something like peace—in vain; being thwarted in all his efforts by the profligacy of his fellow-citizens, the ambition of the house of France, and the immorality and avarice of the then court of Rome; and from these perils he was at last extricated by a sapient leader, or duke, Virgil, as I said before.

In the present article there are two points to be demonstrated: that the middle of human life means 35 years, and thus gives us the exact date of the opening of the poem; and that the forest does signify, as I have averred, the turbulent politics of the time.

The days of our years are three score years and ten, says the Bible; and it is the same idea that Dante himself repeats in the Convito—'the summit of our arch is in the thirty fifth year' (1). It is superfluous to seek for further authority; by saying he was in the middle of life, he must have meant he was in his thirty fifth year. That he was born in May,

(1) p. 195.

1265, is a settled point (1); but if proof is desired, let the single one of Boccaccio suffice:—'Dante died on the fourteenth of september 1321, and I have spoken with one of his most intimate friends, M. Giardino of Ravenna, who affirmed to me, that he on his death-bed told him that in the preceding month of May he had been 56 years old' (2). Now taking 56 from 1321 we have 1265, or the period of his birth; and adding to this 35, to bring him to the middle of human life, we have exactly 1300; on the fifteenth of June of which he was created one of the Priors, or supreme magistrates, of the Florentine Republic (3) — an office which, however honorable to his reputation, was fatal to his repose. By it was furnished the pretext for his banishment; eternal banishment from his (dolce nido) 'darling nest'; from 'the holy Jerusalem for which he sat weeping night and day, as if he were in Babylon' (4). So tender was his love for his native Country; and so fondly did he discriminate between her, and the factions which within her had acquired a most tyrannical ascendancy. These he certainly has not spared; but his country through all his misfortunes was the object of his enthusiastic attachment

(1) Voltaire wrote otherwise: but the superficial levity with which he pleaded an excuse for Bayle, when the error was not in Bayle but in Voltaire himself, is justly reprehended by M. Merian Mem. de l'Acad. de Berlin 1784.

(2) Comento p. 19

(3) Priorista Fiorentino p. 41.

(4) Pistola p. 214.

to the last; in his old age we find him exclaiming, O my Country! O my poor Country, how I do pity thee! (1) (evidently more afflicted for her than for himself); and we know with what complacency he designated himself as a Florentine, making himself be introduced always by that title, and almost invariably adding it to his signature with such persevering constancy, that a few instants before he expired, he showed, that his mind was even then chiefly prevented from composing herself by harping on the severity of Florence towards him; for in a tone of reproachful affection he called it 'Mother' (2). Neither Guelph nor Ghibelline, but the advocate of his dear native land and of moral rectitude, he was a man remarkable for patriotism, as we shall have innumerable occasions to observe. Perhaps even there is no other instance of that virtue's outliving severer trials; the most inveterate malignity of his fellow-citizens, his own exile, the dispersion of his friends, the ruin of his property, and (what would be scarcely credible if the infamous document were not still extant in the Archives) the fearful indignity of a law passed to authorize any magistrate to make him, as soon as caught, be, without further trial burnt alive (3). It is observable that this last outrage is never

(1) O Patria! O misera Patria mia, quanta pietà mi stringe per te! Convito p. 203.

(2) P. Jovius. Elogia.

(3) ... igne comburatur sic quod moriatur. Cancel. p. 58.

mentioned in any of his writings, as if he were unwilling to publish the disgrace of his country; and it consequently escaped all his biographers, and was, for the first time, noticed by the indefatigable Tiraboschi a few years ago. In his letters, his Convito, his songs, his great poem, the sorrows of an exile recur continually: and there must be to certain minds something far more painful in exile than in death; since we find him, who was never terrified by the latter in any shape, quite subdued by the former. As tender, but with much more dignity than Ovid, he at times seems exasperated to a feeling of gloomy satisfaction in brandishing invective almost wantonly; as if it were an alleviation of the pain he experienced in being forced to stigmatise the criminality and folly of his townsmen, to inflict the same unsparing penalty on mankind in general. But his strain of dejection is more impressive: 'How hard is it to go up and down the stair-case of a stranger!' is his exclamation; and, in his prose at least, it is this feeling, much more than resentment, that is uppermost. 'Rome's loveliest daughter hath cast me from her sweet bosom' (he cries) 'where I was born and brought up; and where it is my fondest hope to be permitted one day to return for the repose of my wearied spirit, and to pass the last of the years allotted me in this world: in which I have verily been tost about like a wretched unmasted hulk, the sport of every cruel wind, bear-

ing to a variety of lands and ports the dead weight of poverty and grief, and exposing my person to the scrutiny of the vulgar; thereby lessening my character (1) and, what is worse, the utility of all my productions' (2). And again he declares his willingness to purchase his recall at any price but his honor: 'dear father, let any way be found not derogatory to the honor of Dante, and I shall not be slow in accepting it. But if by none such Florence is to be entered, never shall I enter Florence' (3). These were bodings equally sad as prophetic; he never entered it more, alive or dead:—

Ungrateful Florence! Dante sleeps afar
Like Scipio buried by the upbraiding shore—

and the traveller, missing his relics in Santa-Croce, will probably, like the illustrious poet just quoted, take a journey to Ravenna to seek them.

From what I have said it is apparent, that Dante's exile was the immedicable wound of his heart: and, I think, it is little less clear that by the dreadful forest is to be understood, not indeed his exile itself, as the Gentleman (4) who gave me the first hint of my interpretation of this allegory attempted to show, (for since Dante's exile did not take place until 1302, he could not be described as entangled

(1) Qui se ipse norit, primum aliquid sentiet se habere divinum, ingeniumque in se suum, sicut simulacrum aliquod dedicatum putabit. De legibus l. 1. p. 22.

(2) Convito p. 57.

(3) Pistola. Cancell. p. 59.

(4) G. Marchetti Dis.

in it now in 1300) but what produced that exile — his Priorship, or rather the long political uproar that preceded it: and this last observation is enforced by the reflection, that in the first sentence of this poem he does not tell us he entered the forest in the middle of human life, but that he still found himself lost in it; for the Italian is not *mi trovai*, 'I found me', but *mi ritrovai*, 'I still found me'. 'All my misfortunes' (says he in one of his letters) 'are to be deduced from my ill-omened Priorship; of which, however far from being worthy in other respects, neither in fidelity nor in age was I unworthy: for ten years had elapsed since the battle of Campaldine, where I was no novice in arms; but took a full share in the troubles of that day and in the joy for that victory by which the Ghibelline faction was, it may be affirmed, undone for ever' (1). It is then no wonder, if the year in which he bore that Office be marked as the critical one of his existence; as the one in which he perceived what a dangerous wilderness he was in, and amid what ferocious foes. There are good reasons to believe, that the composition of this poem was begun before 1300: but that in nowise invalidates my interpretation; for it is equally true, that it is supposed to open (whatever be the exact period at which its Author commenced it) in 1300: a year which, even in prospect,

(1) Vita. Leon. Arret. p. x.

must have had peculiar attractions for him, from its being to be the beginning of a Century, and the middle of human life in his own regard, and from its being announced as a *jubilee* throughout Europe. He must have foreseen from the outset, that his poem could not be terminated until years later; so that there could be no r[illegible]n against pre-selecting the above epoch for its opening, at least none founded on an apprehension of its publication preceding its date: and, when he afterwards found 1300 become still more memorable than he had foreseen, (viz by his Priorship) he had no inducement to make any alteration. Or he might have altered many things in these Canti long after having composed them; some I am sure he did. And why not? what poet does not retouch his verses? None of Dante's stamp spare the file. He might possibly have put some other date to the first copy of this Canto, and, seven or eight years afterwards, changed it to the present one of 1300. Such are vain conjectures of which we know nothing: all I mean to assert is, that there is no deciding from this passage as to when the poem began to be composed; so that we, on that head, shall be at full liberty to argue hereafter without having carried along any incumbrance. But that its action opens with the opening of the fourteenth century, when its Author was ingulfed in politics, is beyond doubt, and could be much further proved were it necessary; and from all I have said

I hope my second position also will follow, of the forest being allegorical of those turbulent politics. Yet I seek no singularity of opinion, but to show the historic truth. The forest by other Commentators is represented as meaning simply and abstractedly vice and error; and by some the vice of Dante himself. But as to these latter, they are at variance with the fact of his having been reputed one of the most moral of mankind, and no other of his works discovering any thing like the confession of Ambition, Voluptuousness and Avarice, which they would put into his mouth here: and as to the former, they surely set their author somewhat at variance not only with the common language of ethics, and with the Bible, but even with himself; for vice is mostly said to be a gay, alluring walk of flowers, though leading to ruin (1); when the path of truth is termed *strait and narrow*, we conclude that its opposite is *wide and easy*, and far from *black* and *brambly*; and so, this scriptural phrase, *strait and narrow*, occurring in the third line of Dante's poem — *dritta via*, — a similar conclusion ensues. He is made much too mystical, because people will not peruse him by the light of History. If they did, this, as well as many other passages, would be reconciled to common-sense: for, though to typify, by a bleak

(1) Imitatrix boni, malorum autem Mater omnium. De leg: L. 1.

desert abstract vice be rather inconsistent, it may not be so with regard to a particular species of it. But of no species of it can this be so well predicated, as of the identical vice with which Dante was surrounded, sanguinary faction. A soldier, a diplomatist, ten times ambassador, and once amongst the supreme Magistrates of one of the most stormy of democracies, he must, at an early age, have had to deal with criminality enough, too disgusting to partake half as much of the seduction of vice, as of its thorns; and therefore better described as a brambly wilderness, than as a way of flowers, the proper symbol of vice taken in general. Boccaccio calls the forest the hell of human life when defiled with wickedness; adding, that some Catholic Saints speak of three hells, two beneath the surface of the earth, and one in the heart of the living sinner—a doctrine which I find in Macrobius, but not in Dante. Even this however introduces a difference rather in names, than things. The hell he meant must have been that around him: but he was then in turbulent Florence embroiled in politics. In these then was he lost, whatever name or image, you give to the scene of his wanderings; whether a forest or a hell.

B.— VIII.

His weal we shall find brought about by the ity caused by his mishaps; so that, by specifying these, and showing how they were converted by he. ven

into instruments of felicity (his political career being renounced for philosophy and the tranquil Muses) we are informed, that a principal branch of his sublime undertaking is to glorify Providence, and prove that our mortal miseries are often made the causes of our immortal happiness.

There is still extant a portion of the latin version in which Dante had begun to write, when his better judgment induced him to relinquish a dead for the merit of building a living tongue: — then a daring generosity, which Petrarch had not the courage to follow in his Africa (1).

C. — XX.

Nel lago del cuor, 'in the lake of the heart', has become a favourite with Italians, and by Redi is used very beautifully. I dare say however, Dante employed the expression less as a figure of speech, than scientifically as an anatomist, in order to affirm, that fear had the dangerous effect of accumulating the blood violently in the ventricles of the heart. It is a matter on which Fontanini and others quote our poet: but I need not enter into the discussion.

D. — XXIV.

Surely there are few similes superior to this one: and, if it be taken from the Odyssey, it is im-

(1) Ultima regna Canam etc.
Bocc. Vita di Dante p. 258.

proved too; for Homer does not give that 'scowl *back*' upon the furious element (1) — *guata* — and that this particularity adds incomparably to the spirit and fidelity of the sketch, will, I believe, be apparent to every reader. I must warn those who are familiar with M. Ginguéné's *Literary history*, that, however meritorious a compilation it be in many points, it mis-translates this passage altogether, (2) as M. Biagioli very justly remarks: and, although a french review (3) is too partial to allow it, it was quite natural in an Italian to reprehend an error tending to deform one of the fine metaphors of his renowned Countryman in the eyes of strangers. The *fleeing* of the spirit is from the Aeneid—animus meminisse horret luctuque *refugit* (4): and Dante's translation of one of the psalms — persecutus est inimicus animam meam — repeats the same figure, 'my spirit is put to flight' (5).

E. — XXVI.

The text, word for word, is 'the pass that never left any one alive'. What else is the obvious signifi-

(1) If one more happy while the tempest raves
Outlives the tumult of conflicting waves,
All pale, with ooze deformed he views the strand,
And plunging forth with transport grasps the land.
Pope. B. 23.

(2) Hist. Litt. d'Italie. Vol. 2.
(3) Revue Encyclopedique 1819.
(4) Lib. 2. v. 12.
(5) L'alma mia in fuga è mossa. I sette salmi di D. A. p. 121.

cation of this, but the worldly uproar which never left any one perfectly virtuous, that is, in the eastern style, perfectly alive; guilt and folly being the death, as virtue and reason the life of the soul? Many are the passages in Scripture that inculcate this: for even « the just man falleth seven times a day « and » it is written there is no righteous, not one ». Here then we have a mere orientalism, of which we shall discover others frequently: and, to corroborate my statement, that 'the pass leaving no one alive' means simply 'scenes that deprive the soul of her purity', which is to kill her, I refer to Dante's own expressions in the Convito:— 'when a man is said to live, that means, that he acts in conformity with reason, which is his true life' (1).

F. — XXX.

'So that the firm foot was always the lowest' is the original: which was manifestly employed to denote the vacillation of purpose, with which Dante made his first fruitless attempts at extricating himself from the guilt and bustle of public life, or, in the language of allegory, from the dark vale or wilderness, and at ascending the sun-clad mountain of wisdom and virtue. This unsteadiness of mind being the principal thing, I took care in the first place to mark it; after which I introduced

(1) Quando si dice l'uomo vivere si dee intendere l'uomo usar la ragione, ch'è sua special vita. p. 88.

as much of the metaphor of my original, as I well could. And if any of it has escaped me, I regret it the less from the persuasion, that it can only be some blameable quaintness, which causes the disputes between interpreters about the precise metaphorical solution of the verse; — quaintness that I am authorized to avoid. It used to be lauded as happily expressive of the act of climbing: but this has been controverted lately by the remark, that the firm foot, that is to say the foot on which the weight of the body reposes, is so far from being always the lowest in ascending, that it is in descending that it is so; — a criticism esteemed so cogent, that the defenders of Dante think it necessary for his honor to change the entire face of the allegory, and deny that there is a question about climbing. He was still on the level plain, say they, and the line describes the walking on a plain perfectly well; for there the lower foot is always the firm foot, being on the ground, while its companion is in the air, whether moving back or forward. This is indeed self-evident; but not so its application: for the context unequivocally implies, that the Wanderer was not on the dead level, but beginning to make the height. But may I not arraign the commentators for error? The weight is not *always* upon the lower foot, either in ascending, or descending; but, in both cases, is sometimes upon the lower and sometimes upon the higher one: when in ascending I put forward one foot,

then is my weight upon the hinder or lower one, making it the firm one for a moment; and while I am in the act of drawing up this latter, then is the upper foot for a moment the firm one in its turn: vice-versa in my descending. So neither of the one or the other are the words of the text strictly descriptive. Then if the context argues, that Dante was no longer on the plain, and his mode of stepping, that he was neither ascending nor descending, must he not have meant an unnatural, unavailing gait, something akin to the 'I would and would not' — vorrei e non vorrei — of the Italians? Or, making *lower* synonimous with less worthy, (a common mode of speech) have intended *lower foot* as symbolical of earthly cares and appetites, whence, by saying this foot was always the lower one, he avowed, that the cares of life continued to have more influence over his affections, than philosophy and virtue, even while he was forming some ineffectual resolutions to fly those and elevate his mind to these? This unsteady product of disappointments and fears, which might well have sprung up in a patriot's bosom at that time, as will be acknowledged by the readers of Tuscan history, was beyond doubt what was intended to be inculcated (whatever be held to be the precise metaphorical interpretation); and this abortive infirmity of heart is, I hope, conveyed by my version, 'with steps that backward hung'.

G. — XXXII.

In considering the Panther as a personification of Florence, I am, in at least a slight degree, at variance with the Commentators; for these say it personifies either the vice of voluptuousness in the abstract, or the voluptuousness of Dante. Still am I not without some authority for my interpretation (1); and, even were I, it renders so intelligible this Allegory (which otherwise has an air of perplexity, particularly when we come to the lion and wolf) and it tallies so exactly with history, that, I think, it ought to be adopted. There are three wild-beasts in the Canto, in imitation, as shall appear, of a passage in Jeremiah, where they are universally interpreted as three several nations. Now, whatever ideas of vice Dante intended to convey, he could never have so misled his readers and so rambled from his sacred original, as to have dropt all reference to nations, a grand conception adapted to the opening of a grand poem: but rather he would have connected both objects, and, faithful to the Biblical example with which he had set out, would have designated by each beast some particular State with its ruling passion. This would be the obvious contrivance of even an inferior poet, and would be the only way to avoid falling into the *Bathos* after having alluded to the sublime

(1) Gio. Marchetti Discor. Bologna 1819.

imagery of the old Testament. Of the two opinions of the Commentators, one indeed is not only not incompatible with this my interpretation, but, well considered, implies it: for if Dante meant Voluptuousness in the abstract, yet, to injure and plague him, it must have been such as immediately was round him; but he was then in Florence; he must then have meant the voluptuousness of Florence. As to the making of Dante accuse himself of that vice, it is in contradiction with every thing that has come down to us of his life and manners; which his enemies decried as stoically severe, while his friends contended they were only of a very laudable gravity (1). Florentines may object to have their City represented by such an unchaste creature as the Panther (2): but they have so continually to complain of Dante, that to wince here were superfluous; and they would do better to avail themselves of the defence made for them by their contryman Mini (3). Strangers, at least, will have no difficulty in believing that Florence was remarkable for its voluptuousness, when they read it, not only in other parts of this

(1) Furono i suoi costumi gravi e laudevoli tutti. Bocc. Com. Vol. 1. p. 8.

(2) Molto accesa nella libidine. Land. Com.

(3) Dante non biasima giammai assolutamente la sua patria e i Fiorentini, ma bensì alcuni Fiorentini di quei tempi, e il cattivo e tirannico governo di essa: come biasimarono già gli Scrittori de' loro tempi le proscrizioni di Mario e di Silla, i vizi di Catilina, l'avarizia di Crasso, la crudeltà del Triumvirato, e la sfrenata libidine di M. Antonio. Difesa p. 26.

poem, but in almost all the writings of Boccaccio; for it is not the Decameron alone, which dwells on the licentious habits of his native town. 'There'—says he—'the ladies, unable to conceal the inextinguishable fire of their voluptuousness, seek by every artifice to increase that of the men. Lascivious in their gaze and half naked in their persons, they scatter vice and death itself through the town, and make it one reservoir of nastiness (1): while, on the other hand, they are more than rivaled in profligacy by our debauched youth of the male sex, who, less civilized than the Ethiopians, Indians, or any of the new-discovered savages, will probably soon be seen without any clothing whatever; and in that will imitate the brute beasts, whom in want of shame and reason they have long since surpassed'. But voluptuousness is not the only characteristic of the Panther, but also beauty and cruelty. This latter is proved to have belonged to Florence by her treatment of Dante himself; and as to the former, it still exists within her walls to speak for itself. If to an *Oltremontano*, a cool, casual visitor, she appears even now the loveliest town in Europe, what must she not have been in the days of her liberty to her own favoured child? On the beauty of the Panther he consequently dilates: and I know of no creature, that could have answered his purposes as well as

(1) Ostel di lordura. Com. Vol. 1. p. 330.

this, who furnished mantles both to Paris and Venus (1); and of whom it is recounted, that she hath the craft to conceal her head, so that the most timid animals, when no longer repelled by a certain fierceness that is in her eyes, approach that charming wild beast, the fairness of whose dappled hide is so alluring: and she, wheeling round, tears them in pieces without compassion (2). It may be even supposed that he used her in a good sense, as in his Volgare Eloquenza, or grammar, and so personified the beautiful Florence, without any reference either to cruelty or voluptuousness: for, meaning to affirm that the pure literary Italian is not to be found in any of the dialects of Italy, his words are: 'having beat all the groves and pastures of Italy without finding the desired *Panther*' (3).

H. —— XL.

Although learned men have disputed whether the world was created in autumn or in spring, yet we know this latter to have been Dante's opinion: and he here inculcates it with an astronomical reference, to understand which, his readers must have acquired some principles of astronomy. Two things are to be kept in mind: the low state

(1) Iliad. Lib. 3. 18.
(2) Plin. Ap. Land. Com.
(3) Postquam venati saltus et pascua sumus Italiæ nec *Panteram* quam sequimur invenimus p. 39.

of science in Dante's age, and his passionate wish to be useful. As to the former, it is certain that he had amassed a store of information physical and moral far surpassing that of his contemporaries; as will be apparent to any one who glances over the books of his preceptor, Brunetto Latini: and as to the latter, sufficient proofs of it will be found in his conduct by those who consider it attentively; and that it was the great scope of his writings, we have not only weighty internal evidence, as shall be fully demonstrated, but even his own unqualified assertion in the Monarchia — « ut utiliter mundo provigilem » (1). Hence to gain the reputation of a poet was with him a secondary object: his primary one being to benefit his countrymen by the continual repetition of lessons of philosophy and virtue, in poetry and prose, in his life both political and private. It is impossible to do him, or his compositions, justice without viewing them in this light. If he wrote his sweet rhymes of love and the Vita Nuova, he followed them with a comment full of lofty speculations and showing how united was that noble love with the most refined philosophical doctrines; so that the reader was told to consider the being they celebrate to be no earthly dame, however fair, but one that is eternally fair and wise, philosophy herself. That indeed was not the case; a real

(1) p. 2.

lady had been his theme, a lovely lady of youth and innocence, of rank and beauty, who, from his ninth year to the day of his death, occupied an altar in his memory; and whose influence, after her decease, is more or less to be traced throughout all his productions, as if he thought that cherishing it sanctified his pen. But such was the sublime purity of his tenderness, that what it had addressed to a mortal was not unworthy of being transferred to an immortal power; what the conscious poet had written to woo a girl of Florence was to be considered by others as in praise of celestial wisdom; and no party was loser by the change. Thus what would have been a mere amorous trifle, chiefly commendable as a specimen of language, became highly dignified; as if the notion of his mistress were so angelical, so delicately sensitive, that it shrunk from permitting her to be esteemed human; or as if he were too deeply impressed with a reverence for his own talents and the important ends for which alone they were given him, to allow any individual feeling to divert them from the public service: and, thus explained, even those works treat of many abstruse, scientific problems and continually refer to the various ethical systems ancient and modern. Of three females whom he had particulary admired, two has he handed down as representing charity and grace; and the third, as I have said, is every where introduced as the personification

of divine, all-comprehending wisdom: which, after having purified and strengthened his soul, was to guide him to that ineffable city, that « hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof » (1). When even his amours were thus rendered instrumental to his design of enlightening his fellow-men, it is no wonder that he embraced also every other opportunity of doing so. On this scale should we estimate those astronomical paraphrases, which we shall find continually; and should such modes of designating so simple a thing as the hour or the season appear cumbersome now, and as incurring exposure to the Attic repartee —— potueras hoc igitur a principio citharista dicere (2) —— yet be it recollected, that they are acknowledged to have been eminently beneficial once; for they decked with the irresistible attractions of a popular poem many allusions, in learning to understand which, no class of auditors could fail to gather a large stock of instruction. To have formed its language then is but a trivial part of the advantages for which Italy should be grateful to Dante. She has had scarcely a man of science, since the fourteenth Century, who reaped not some profit to his peculiar avocations from a diligent perusal of the Divine Come-

(1) Rev. 21, 23.
(2) De divin. l. 2. p. 59.

dy; many of the modern discoveries are supposed to be indicated in it, and some of them are so certainly: while as to the fine arts, it really opened a new æra; and, in the same sense that Phidias and Apelles were said to *homerize*, Michael Angelo and Raphael might be said to *dantize*; particularly the former, who, according to his scholar, Condivi, knew all the verses of Dante by heart and avowedly imitated two passages of them in those masterpieces of painting and of sculpture, the Last Judgment and the tomb of Julius (1). Dante then is more than a poet, if poetry and science be incompatible, as a polite Critic labours in several dissertations to persuade the World (2). But the first law-givers were poets; and to the chief poets (whatever be the follies and errors of their subalterns) is mankind indebted in every branch of knowledge. It were then both ungrateful and unjust to adopt the theory of M. Merian: and few, I imagine, will agree with him in believing, that Ossian is entitled to the highest rank in poetry—that Homer and Solomon were quite illiterate—that but *four traits of science* are to be found in all Virgil—that the sole business of the Epic Muse is to please the fancy and soften the heart. Some there are, I know, who esteem it her duty to invi-

(1) Vita di M. A. Buonarroti.

(2) Comment les Sciences influent sur la poesie. Mem. Berlin 1774, 1778, 1784, 1786.

gorate the intellect and inform the judgment; and who are ready to repeat Sir Phillip Sydney's opinion: «these Vates or poets both delight and teach; delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which, without delight, they would fly as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved; which is the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed » (1).

Sic honor et nomen divinis vatibus atque
Carminibus venit (2).

Having once shown (3) that the poem opens in 1300, and now that the sun is moving in Aries, at dawn, it is clear that the precise time is day-break in the spring of that year; and, descending still more to particulars, we discover (4) it to be Good-friday — a day sanctified to an Italian by his poetry as well as his creed; for it was on it that not only Dante chose to begin his Divine Comedy, but Petrarch, with somewhat less propriety, his melodious amours. Good-friday in 1300 was April the eighth, Easter-sunday falling on the tenth: — to be most minutely exact then, the poem opens at sun-rise, April the eighth, 1300 O. S. — Let this be marked with more emphasis than it seems to merit; for by it we are at once placed in full

(1) Defence p. 15.
(2) Hor. de Art. poet.
(3) p. 8.
(4) Hell. Canto XXI.

relation with the Florentine chroniclers of that time, and with various legal documents still extant. It was for this I said, that the forest personified not exactly his Priorship, but his political scene in general: for his Priorship only began in *June* 1300, when he was about a month entered into his thirty-sixth year; whereas we here find him in the forest in the *preceding April*, when consequently he was yet in his thirty-fifth; having been born in May, as I said before. Such precision is not required in a poem, and still less in an allegory; yet when it occurs it may be noticed: and no composition, in prose or metre, with which I am acquainted, is so remarkable for it as this. The minute consistency of its chronology is most characteristic, and singularly accordant with the apparently casual expressions in Dante's own minor works, as well as with the historians and critics nearly, or altogether, his contemporaries: (1) whereas the case is quite the contrary with more modern commentators. Read with the former, the Divine Comedy displays an accuracy, as to dates, unknown to poetry and seldom known even to history; read with the latter, it seems a heap of incongruous anachronisms.

(1) Boccaccio, Benvenuti of Imola, the Riccardi M. S., Villani, Dino Compagni, the Priorists and the comments, one in Italian and the other in Latin, of Dante's own sons, Peter and Jacob.

I. —— XLIII.

It is an excellent mode of commenting to compare different passages of this poem with each other; that is, to interpret those which are become a little obscure by those whose meaning is obvious: but not, vice versa, to quote a disputed verse when that at present under consideration is quite clear; for this solves not the difficulty where there is one, and introduces a difficulty where there was none. I shall not therefore make any reference here to a paragraph of a future Canto, as is the custom; and then what is there in the text to puzzle us? Verbally it runs thus: 'the gay skin of that wild beast, the hour of the day and the sweet season all gave me cause to hope'. And who ever took a walk of a spring morning without feeling hope? And was it not still more natural at sight of a lovely creature personifying home? I do not however reject the suspicion of this hope, whose date is so carefully noted, alluding to some political appearances then well known, but long since irreparably sunk into oblivion.

K. —— XLV.

The lion is held by some commentators to represent ambition in the abstract; and by some the ambition of Dante himself. But neither of them can be maintained without the introduction of much mysticism, or without turning away our

heads from History, instead of always looking towards it as a guide. The fact is, that Dante, far from avowing himself to be an ambitious citizen, always took care to aver the contrary: and, as to allegorising at length an abstract affection of the mind, it is not his style at all; for we shall find his poetry remarkable for its evidence. To say nothing of the monstrous egotism of a person pretending that his own ambition appeared to terrify the very air, or the hardship of making him accuse himself of a vice, which were sufficient cause for the exile, of which he always complained as unjust; to describe an ambitious man as scared by his own ambition, is a dubious, if not a contradictory position. Such a one were rather pusillanimous than ambitious. To represent him as frightened by ambition in the abstract, is, to me at least, little less unintelligible. To strike terror, that passion seems to require embodying, and, since the shape of a lion is merely figurative, we must seek for the real body in which it was intended to be drawn. If we look at that passage in the Bible, of which, as I have observed, this whole allegory is a copy: — « A lion out of the forest shall slay them, a wolf of the deserts shall spoil them, a leopard (or panther) shall watch over their cities; every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces »: — we find the lion interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar and army (1). Elsewhere in the

(1) Jeremiah v. 6.

same Prophet are similar personifications; and in another of the sacred scribes we read: —— » her Princes within her are roaring lions » (1). The lion in Daniel (2) is said, by sir Isaac Newton, to denote the kingdoms of Babylonia and Media. In fine, it is an animal employed throughout the Bible to personify great realms and Monarchs. It being then so probable, that here too it represents some powerful crowned head at that time in Europe, there is none to whom it can with any plausibility be applied but the King of France; whose house were active persecutors of Dante, and whom we shall find Dante's muse does not spare. But, to set the matter at rest, we have Dante's own word for it; and he tells us plainly who the lion is, when, addressing one of the French Princes, he speaks of his elder brother, the Sovereign, as 'a still loftier lion' (3). Indeed the ambitious views of the French Court had been long calculated to inspire every Florentine patriot with dread; and, a few years later, brought the Republic to ruin, by invading it under the pretence of amity. Since one of the most ancient scholiasts here remarks, that the lion resembleth, in one particular, the most timorous of all animals, the hare, for both of them sleep with their eyes open (4), it is possible,

(1) Zephaniah 3. 3.
(2) Observations on the Prophecies. Chap. 4. —— Dan. VII. 4.
(3) Più alto *leon*. Parad. Canto VI.
(4) Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016.

that, this observation being common in Dante's day, there might be a sarcasm here implied, which is now not obvious.

Although I must not pretend to develope my author's character in this incipient comment, but shall often have to beg of my readers to concede for a while positions, that shall be clearly proved hereafter, (otherwise I should have to write a volume on this first Canto) yet when I deny, not only that Dante ever avowed he was an ambitious citizen, but also that he was one, it may be necessary to cite something as cursory evidence of his patriotism and general morality —— qualities precluding ambition: meaning, of course, selfish, iniquitous ambition, and not an honorable love of fame; for to this he was always tremblingly alive. Now listen to Philelfo speaking an oration in the Florentine cathedral, by the side of the high Altar, to an audience, who well knew Dante's moral reputation, and would not certainly (whatever they might think of his poetry) have tolerated an exaggerated encomium of the man whom their fathers had proscribed. 'There are, as you are aware, O my fellow-townsmen, four principal virtues that concur to the human welfare: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. In the first of these, consisting, according to Tully, in the knowledge of good and evil, I do not hesitate to pronounce that no philosopher of either Greece or Rome, excelled I do not say, but

equalled our Dante. As to his justice, you are all acquainted with it; and certainly this Republic never was blessed with a more meritorious magistrate, or one that enforced the laws more impartially without distinction of parties or of rich and poor. Yes! you yourselves, grave and distinguished citizens, will extol our poet as the most devoted lover, the most rigorous observer of that divine justice, which is defined by Justinian to be a constant and perpetual inclination to administer equity to every one — lofty, celestial attribute! Above all words of mine was our Dante's temperance. And as to his fortitude, what better can I do than conjure you, O countrymen, to imitate it? And so shall you possess the constancy and boldness, that are requisite in this perilous war, we are now waging against tyrants, who menace our liberties. You then I cite as witnesses to establish this incontestible truth, that our great bard was conspicuous, above his generation, in pure patriotism and a holy culture of all the four cardinal virtues'.

L — XLIX.

If the usual interpretations put on the panther and lion be unsatisfactory, still more so are they that are put on the she wolf. With her is connected the idea of lewd avarice; and mercenary strumpets were called *she wolves* by the Latins,

and a brothel, a *wolf-lair* (1). But to make her here denote an abstract vice of that kind — as most of the ancient Commentators do — is liable to the objections already pointed out with regard to the two other wild beasts; and some cruel, unchaste, avaricious, human power must have been intended. Hence many moderns have made our poet designate his own enormities. Who was ever so pursued by calumny? His most deadly antagonists could desire no more complete justification of their severity towards him, than to find his very admirers obliging him to confess himself guilty of such manifold iniquities — unparalleled voluptuousness, rabid ambition, and lewd, all-devouring avarice. This is in curious contrast with the quotation in the preceding Article. To pretend (as some have) that Dante debases his own reputation through *humility* is preposterous. No one ever spoke so much of himself, and applied to his individual person the three noble metaphors of a Prophet through humility: nor did any one ever pretend to be a dangerous villain through humility. To have banished such a fiend from the commonwealth were a mercy. But this interpretation renders him not only hateful, but absurd. To cause him to predict, that a patron should destroy his avarice by enriching him (as is done a few

(1) Spurca saliva *lupæ* — O lutum, *lupinar*!
Catull. Carm. 42—99.

lines lower) might, possibly, pass; although in contradiction with the proverb alluded to a moment after — 'whom food but makes more ravenous still' (1): but really to make him affirm, that that patron shall expel his avarice 'from State to State' (as is the necessary consequence) is too ridiculous. For the same reasons given in arguing about the lion and panther, this she wolf also must personify some potent Sovereign, or realm; and one characteristically avaricious, if (as is vulgarly and, I think, rightly supposed) she have a necessary connection with that sordid sin. This consideration alone might suffice to prove the Papacy of that day was meant; because under the then reigning pontiffs (Boniface and a few of the worst of his immediate predecessors and successors) the court of Rome became so scandalously tainted with avarice, that this was denounced as its ruling passion above every other European Government; and, as such, was anathematized by none more severely than various holy writers of its own communion: but not only such indirect testimony establishes, beyond cavil, that the Popedom, and no other, was the she wolf, but the direct positive affirmation of Dante himself, in different passages of this very poem. In Canto VII., for instance,

(1) Largis cum potius muneribus fluens
Sitis ardescit habendi.
Boetius Consol. l. 2. cap. 2.

we shall find the demon of avarice in the shape of a *male wolf* and all the favourites of his infernal seraglio said to be Popes and their train (1). The association in latin of she wolf with harlot and of both with avarice moreover implies, that, when Dante (like so many other devout Catholics, and even ecclesiastics, indignant at the corruption of the heads of their Religion) directed against Boniface and his immediate rivals in impiety a celebrated reproach of the Apocalypse, he could hardly fail of having present to his mind, besides the idea of lewdness and lucre, that, likewise, of the incestuous sister of the brute, whom, as I have just said, we shall find selected to personify the money-fiend: ——

Oh! loathing breeds
Your lust of lucre, Pastors! Knaves!
Whom did the scribe of Patmos view
In her, the harlot throned on waves
And whoring with the Kings of earth, but you (2)?

Petrarch (himself a church-man and a zealous one) links together the same notions, whoredom, avarice and Babylon, and applies them in precisely the same manner —— 'Avaricious, Babylonian jade! may fire from heaven consume thy braided tresses!' (3) Here, without circumlocution, is the

(1) Papi e Cardinali.
(2) Hell. Canto xix.
(3) Son. 105—6.

unworthy Pope said to be typified by a whore: could the same voice have hesitated to call him a she wolf? Or is this latter a less decorous title? Or rather must they not both have been synonimes to Dante, as in the original latin? Pure latin he inserts continually in almost every Canto, as well as in the present one (1): he could not then have overlooked the latin signification of she wolf (lupa); nor had he any reason to deem his readers ignorant of it. In fine since all agree, that the she wolf must represent something lewd and avaricious, and Dante was neither, and, even if he were, could never have been so hyperbolical, as to talk of his friend chasing that avarice from State to State; since he must then have meant by the she wolf some avaricious power and a mighty one, to avoid derogating from his Scriptural model; and since he elsewhere declares avarice to be the characteristic of bad Popes, and calls them a mercenary whore, which, translated into latin, is *lupa* or she wolf, and puts them in the exclusive favour of a he wolf, — I presume it will be allowed, that such a body of circumstantial evidence bears me out in considering the she wolf, as a personification of the profaned Pontificate, just as unequivocally as if my author were to spring to life and affirm it directly with his own lip. Nor should this shock any one who knows of what unworthy

(1) Nacqui sub Julio . v. 70.

Popes it is advanced; and with what warmth holy zeal is wont to reprehend the profanation of holy things.

As I have premised, my explanation is not entirely new; though its detailed developement certainly is so. How, it may be inquired, could such an important discovery have failed to have been made long ago by the numerous commentators? But these, it is avowed, are guilty of many errors (some of which are pointed out every day) and therefore it is no hardiness to assert, they may err here: their verbose elucidations are too frequently not at all lucid; many of them were ignorant of their author's meaning; and, if some had penetrated it, they were unwilling, or unable to hazard its publication, — for reasons not unapparent to an Italian historian. Both of Dante's sons show the utmost embarassment on the matter, and evidently labour with either complete ignorance of their father's intention, or fear to avow it: and Boccaccio himself, when interpreting the three wild beasts, as voluptuousness, ambition and avarice, said he did so in conformity with popular fame, rather than his own conviction; and his expressions seem even to disclose a kind of mysterious dislike of hazarding any individual opinion (1). Nor is this as strange as what is observed of the pastorals of Virgil, compositions studied

(1) Com. vol. 1. p. 7.

during ages and unimplicated with faction, —— that, up to the days of Dryden, « the only riddle they contain had never yet been solved by any of the commentators ». (1) Nothing obstructed the full explication of the pastorals; no antagonists political or theological, no charges of Ghibellinism or irreverence. An allegory is only a longer riddle. Yet Dante might not have aspired to much mystery; but might have deemed, that even the considerations adduced by me were enough to unveil his intent; and no doubt but, at the period when he wrote, there were others still more evident. He did not foresee what an oblivious effect timidity, party and professional scruples were to have over a poem destined, by its very nature, to have churchmen for its critics. Should it please any one, however, to prefer either of the interpretations of others, there is nothing in my translation more than in the Original to prevent him; and, in the course of these comments, he has been informed what both those interpretations are. Yet to reconcile the whole is not hard; only let the text and history be kept in view together. One is a single allegory, a Canto which is merely an introduction to the poem; but the latter is to be our guide throughout the whole poem. However each beast be understood, the historical facts remain the same; and it is with these I wish to impress

(1) Preface to Dryden's translation.

the reader. Explain the forest as you will, still it is true, that in 1300 (the year in which the poem opens) Dante was involved in political tumults; whatever be the panther, Florence, like it, was noted for beauty, voluptuousness, and cruelty; whatever the lion, it was with the ambition of France, Dante long struggled, and to which he at last fell victim; and whatever the she wolf, the Papal court was the one characterized in that age as essentially avaricious, and inimical to both Dante and his native country. Ambition, avarice and voluptuousness were the three favourite daughters left by our Cœur-de-lion, on his departure for the East, to « the Templars and the English Prelates (1) ». They seem however to have been too royal a patrimony for any but sovereign powers; and so, in about the lapse of a century, we thus find it divided between a diadem, a coronet and a tiara.

M. —— IX.

The silence of the sun is from the luna silet, and silentia lunæ of the Latins: thus Milton ——

> The sun to me is dark
> And *silent* (2).

(1) Hume Hist. Vol. 2. p. 229.
(2) Samp. Agon.

N. —— LXVIII.

The text is amendui i parenti miei. But *parente* in Italian, like the french *parent*, means, not a father or mother, but any relation; and an illiterate Italian would not know what the text meant, for he would construe it 'my two relations'. Parenti here then, as well as frequently in Dante, is a latinism, answering to our *parent*, a word that preserves its primitive, latin signification. Dante has been criticised for making Virgil call his parents, Lombards (1): but, although this name was unknown in Virgil's life, it was well known to him at the time he was now speaking; and to make him use it towards his pupil exemplifies kind condescension.

O. —— LXX.

Virgil, according to Donatus (2), was born during the first consulship of Pompey the great, and Crassus; that is, while Cæsar was still an obedient servant of the State and General in Gaul. Some, referring 'though late' to Cæsar's dictatorship, make Virgil express a regret at his not having been born under it; for, as I just said, his birth preceded by several years Cæsar's usurpation. Others will have Virgil apply 'though late' more immediately to himself, and lament that his birth had been too

(1) Lett. dagli Elisij.
(2) Vita P. V. M. p. 1.

late, to permit him to enjoy Cæsar's juvenile triumphs; for, it is clear, some of these took place before Virgil existed, and some while he was too infantile to be conscious of them. But, I think, the sentiment suggested by me —— sorrow for not having been born much earlier, before the first disasters of the Republic (1) —— more characteristic of Dante; and even of Virgil, who (as Dryden well observes) was too sincere a commonwealth's-man to refrain, in the very book recited in the presence of Augustus, from blaming his uncle, Cæsar, albeit in a covert, courtly guise, by the borrowed lip of his fabulous forefather, Anchises (2). Thus to represent Virgil as proud of having been born under the glorious Julius Cæsar, yet as regretting he had not seen still more glorious times, those of undefiled freedom, was natural; whether we attend to the sentiments of that Roman poet himself, or to those of the Tuscan republican, Dante. Here however, as elsewhere, I only propose my opinion, without allowing it to interfere with my translation; for my 'though late' retains all the uncertainty of the original —— ancorchè fosse tardi; and, in this, I obey Ascensius, who, in speaking of a disputed passage in the Aeneid, affirms it is sometimes an artful beauty to arrange a phrase so,

(1) Hos utinam inter heroas natum tellus me prima tulisset!
Hor. Sat. 2. Lib. 2.

(2) Proice tela manu, sanguis meus!
Dryd. Notes. line 1143.

that it becomes susceptible of a variety of explications (1). The epithet given to Ilion in the Italian is superbo —— a literal translation of ceciditque superbum Ilium (2).

P. —— LXXXVII.

In this pathetical burst of encomium, of which the style is so beautiful, (3) Dante however is not unfair to himself; for, though he avows his having had a master in style, it is *Style* alone that is specified. He must have been conscious, that, in still higher qualities, he had neither the will nor the genius that employs itself in imitating others. As inventor, he could not but have felt himself vastly superior to Virgil; of whom Macrobius, nowise unjustly, remarks, that he scarcely inserted an incident in any of his works without having a model in Homer, Apollonius, Pindar, or some other Greek; and that on the only occasion when he appears to have been reduced to his own contrivance he succeeded badly; for that the wounding of a stag and a consequent tumult among country churls is no adequate cause for the breaking out of a war of such importance and all the mighty events to ensue —— the fall of Turnus and the foun-

(1) Artis est interdum sic loqui ut in plureis sententias trahi possumus. Com.

(2) Aeneid. lib. 3. v. 2.

(3) Lo bello stile: Oui certes un beau style, et le plus beau qu'ait employé aucun poëte depuis que Virgile lui meme avait cessé de se faire entendre. Hist. Litt. d'Italie. Vol. 2. p. 30.

ding of Rome (1). Indeed if invention be the highest gift of poetry, (and that it is we have the authority of Dryden) then has Dante but two rivals in that art, — Homer, and Shakespere. If the rest are poets, this triumvirate are vates.

Q — xc.

This verse is sometimes cited to prove the circulation of the blood to be no recent discovery of Harvey; and the citation acquires speciousness from the fact of physic having been one of Dante's favorite studies. A french review (2), seems to think that M. Biagioli was the first to advance such a pretension; but therein it makes a mistake (3).

R. — ci.

In one of the oldest comments, bearing date 1343, that is, only 22 years after Dante's decease, or indeed the very oldest, (unless those left by Dante's own children, Peter and Jacob Alighieri, preceded it, which, in my mind, is improbable) it is asserted, that the best instructed men were then of opinion, that it was impossible to decide who was meant by the hound (4). Similar indecisi-

(1) Saturn. lib 5. Cap. 17. — Aeneid. lib. 7.
(2) Le Journal des Savans.
(3) Magalotti. Lett. Vol. 1.
(4) Chi sia questo Veltro non è diffinito, ed è pretermesso da molti valenti Uomini.
Bib. Ricc. Cod. 1016.

on is displayed by both of the younger Alighieri: Peter, after observing it was a very contested point, —— de quo tantum quæritur —— adds, it was a prediction of the birth of some illustrious personage, but whom he knows not —— prædicit nascere et surgere quemdam plenum sapientiæ; (1) Jacob is of opinion, that hound was inserted merely for the sake of its contra-distinction to wolf, these being animals naturally enemies, —— veltro per contrario della lupa (2). Boccaccio, a little later, owned equal ignorance; although hinting a suspicion of some individual being personified (3). So true is my former observation, that this entire allegory was either mis-understood from the beginning, or soon entirely forgot, or sedulously kept secret by the early annotators; and was afterwards interpreted by the moderns, as best suited their own interests, caprice or prejudice. Landino and others say, that the hound means Christ; at whose second coming, between the heavens, (this being the mystical signification they give Feltri) avarice and every other vice shall be re-consigned to the bottomless pit: or else a certain benign conjunction of the planets calculated by Dante, who is reported even

(5) Bib. Laurenziana.
Plut. XL. Cod. 38.

(6) Id. Id. Cod. 10.

(7) Manifestamente confesso ch'io non l'intendo,..... ma pare intendere altro che non dica la lettera.
Com. Vol. 1. pp. 47--88.

by his son Peter, (though I know not on what ground) to have been, like his master, *Virgil*, a great astrologer — nunc vult se ostendere in judiciis astrologicis scientem; 'which conjunction', adds Landino, 'I have myself, by a new calculation, verified as undoubtedly to take place at two minutes past eight, on the morning of November the twenty-fifth, 1484; for then Saturn and Jove will so meet in the Scorpion, as to prognosticate, with infallible certainty, some mighty change in religion; and, since Jove will be ascendant over Saturn, we may further predict, that, that change will be an amelioration; and will be brought about by a Prince, to be born at the above moment, or else by some other species of potent influence, then to commence' (8): or, finally,

(8) Certo nell'anno 1484 il di 25 Novembre, or: 13, minut: 41, tale sarà la conjuctione di Saturno e di Giove nello Scorpione nel ascendente del quinto grado della libra, la quale dimostrerà mutazione di Religione: e, perchè Giove prevale a Saturno, significa, che tale mutazione sarà in meglio. Questo io veggio, e però il narro.

Ed. della Magna. fol. Fir. 1481.

This odd prophecy of Landino, put forth in such a tone of confidence, having seemingly attracted no notice in the thickly printed volume wherein it occurs, I had the curiosity to try how it could be applied, and found, to my surprise, that, Luther was born in the November of 1484, on the twenty-second, according to his mother, which differs from the prediction by three days; but Bayle informs us, that she owned she could not affirm the date with absolute precision. I know Luther's foes are said to have pretended, that they had drawn opprobrious horoscopes of his birth: but such prejudices could not have dictated the present one, for Landino died in 1504, that is, a dozen years before Luther began to attract attention; besides this is a favourable, rather than a diffamatory prediction, and will please

that Dante might have only intended to poze his readers and start matter for ingenious controversy, as Virgil did in one of his compositions (1). The history of the affair is, that, Dante was at that time busy in seeking for some champion to oppose the usurping spirit of the Papal court; and therefore, if he personified the later as a she wolf, it is likely, that the hound was a personification of the champion he had selected. This agrees very well with what is the common opinion now; that the Veltro — 'Greyhound' — of the text is put for Cane, 'dog'; and that, therefore, the individual meant is a prince of Verona known by the title of Can grande della Scala. He is said to be born mid the 'Feltri', because (remarks Venturi)

neither his friends or foes. Since then Landino was neither a Magician, nor a reputed Prophet, what can be done better than repeat Cicero's sentence — 'a whimsical coincidence of what is foretold and what really comes to pass sometimes happens, otherwise not even an old woman would be superstitious'. The prophecy was known to Sterne (Slawken: tale) but not its origin or date, nor the prophecy itself correctly, for he attributes to it the error of a year, by calling it 1483, whereas we see it was really and truly 1484. He adds, that, Luther was born in December and not November; it may be so, but Bayle decides for the latter. For Sterne to have ridiculed the prediction was quite fair; as well as to have thought it made after the event, if he had never seen Landino's book. If he had, he must have admired the fortuitous verification of the horoscope, even while despising both the astrologer and his art: for not only before Luther became known, did Landino die; but he put his calculation to a fair trial, by divulging it long previous to the period it pretended to foretel; that is, the first edition of his comment, now on my table, was printed and pubblished in August 1481, or above three years before Luther was born. This hypothesis then makes Dante's hound Luther.

(1) Jam redit et virgo. Ecl. 4.

there are two towns of the name of Feltro, and Verona lies between them; a mode of interpreting Feltri known as early as the days of Peter Alighieri, although indeed he only mentions it to condemn it: — dicunt quidam hoc esse in partibus Lombardiæ et Romandiolæ, inter civitatem Feltri et montem Feltri. This is usually corroborated by stating, that Can was a chief protector of our poet and that he dedicated his Paradise to Can. But, although we may go with the momentary stream, so far as to concede that the 'hound' may mean Can, in the absence of any thing more plausible, we must not permit our condescension for an hypothesis totally modern, and which, I repeat it, is without a shadow of any ancient authority, to lead us so wrong as to imagine (with those who disregard dates) that the present passage was composed in gratitude for hospitality received from Can. It were to err much; for it was in all probability written before Can was five years old, and certainly before Dante had had any opportunity of appreciating his character. Even those, who, boldly contradicting Boccaccio, deny that any part of this poem was begun in Florence previous to its authors exile in 1302, must still allow, that this entire Canticle, Hell, was finished, before 1308; and this latter is the earliest period that can possibly be assigned for Dante's visit to Verona, consistently with the shortest time in which his journeys could be performed; as Pelli clearly de-

monstrates. Even supposing he, on that occasion, remained two years and a half at the Veronese court, without ever quitting it, (and it is in this sense, of his having tarried no where else so long throughout his exile, and in this sense alone, that we are hereafter to receive his expression 'principal inn' (1) when speaking of Verona) yet these verses could allude to no such hospitality; since they were written before his going there. If then they refer to Can at all, they must have preceded his kindness to their author. It is most probable they were addressed to Alberto, whom they complimented by predicting the future glories of his youngest and infant child, Can Alberto died in 1301; previous to which year, I am of opinion, that this Canto was, at least, sketched out—though this is not the place to prove it. Dante might have been at Verona, for a day or two, before exiled; or Alberto at Florence; or the Sovereign of Verona and a Florentine Chieftain been well acquainted politically, without ever having met; or these verses might have been sent to the elder brothers, Bartolomeo and Alboino, complimenting them through the youngest, Can: or, infine, they might possibly have been so to this last himself; but it could have been only while he was quite a boy and before Dante came to reside in his city and knew him personally. This shows how ground-

(1) . . . . primo ostello. Parad. XVII. 70.

lessly Venturi and other annotators represent the passage as a poet's flattery of his patron; and how inapplicable are all the flourishes of the Marchese Maffei and his allies (1); who, it must be confessed, are not the only Italians that betray the narrow, pseudopatriotism of being ready to sacrifice the fame of their country in order to foster the pretensions of some single spot in it. The best excuse an advocate could make for them would be to say, that they had not sufficiently studied the subject on which they write: and it were to arraign them of strange negligence. Since this Can, preposterously entitled the great, and his panegyrists have been mentioned, let me, in justice to Dante's reputation as a man, though sadly against it as an astrologer, mention the truth of the matter and how miserably he mistook, when he foretold either hospitality or political achievements. In truth he was soon undeceived. He, as I have said, came to Verona, an exile, in 1308; where he found the father and eldest son dead, and Alboino and Can joint sovereigns. His treatment by the former of these two was probably feeling and honorable, or he could not have staid there even as long as he did; but quite the reverse that of the younger brother, then in his seventeenth year, at whose ostentatious board buffoons and petty tyrants

(1) Verona Illustr. P. 2. l. 2. p. 50—6. Risorgimento. Capo quinto. Istoria di Verona. t. 1. p. 582.

were welcome, but an illustrious guest was not screened from insult (1): although this flattering address (made years before and probably while he was himself in the zenith of prosperity) might have insured him something like a creditor's claim to protection, in his subsequent adversity. Hence he never remained with this youth after he had become sole lord, an event that occurred in 1311, by Alboino's decease; and we find Dante in Tuscany as early as April the sixteenth of that very year, writing to the Emperor one of the few of his letters which are still extant (2). At that date, Can still wanted eleven months of being of age; and Dante never paid any subsequent visit to Verona, except perhaps for a few days in June 1320 to maintain a public disputation, as Cinelli, Negri and others pretend on a very slender authority, (3) — a latin pamphlet printed in Venice, with Dante's name in the title page, but little other proof of authenticity (4). His rambles are hard to follow distinctly; yet, from their multitude and the documents that remain, we see, he did not put the hospitality of any one to a severe trial. His longer sojourns were in Ravenna. In 1313 he was in Venice and Paris and Avignon and, perhaps, Oxford, in 1314 in Ravenna, in Friuli in 1317, in

(1) Petrarca. Rer. Mem. l. 4. — Cinthio Geraldi. p. 209.
(2) Prose. p. 211.
(3) Apost. Zeno. Lett.
(4) Quaestio etc. de aqua et terra.

1318 in Gubbio, in 1319 in Ravenna, in Venice in 1321 (1) and, on his return to Ravenna, in September of that year he died. (2) Maffei then confounds chronology, in order to obtain Verona the exclusive credit of being the birthplace of the Divine Comedy; and defames its author, to varnish up a paltry despot. This even might be considered as rather the effect of inadvertence, than of voluntary mistatement, if he had not shown that he had read the dedication of Paradise, by quoting it to prove Dante's sense of obligation to Can. Now this dedication alone suffices to refute all the Marquis's stories about the pension allowed by that prince to the poet; for it expressly declares that Dante, far from having acquired opulence, was in pecuniary distress; it contains not a word that can be tortured into a confession of his being pensioned by Can, whom he had left for ever years before; and when it mentions his poverty, it is in the honest tone of a man, who, without expecting or perhaps being willing to receive a favour from the personage to whom he writes, regrets candidly that his private difficulties render him less fit for the service of the public. 'It prevents me from composing a Comment on my poem as well as other works that might be of general utility' — urget

(1) Prose. p. 216. — Eloq. Ital. l. II. cap. 20. — Bon. Stor. Trivi. l. 7. — Lami. Deliciæ Erudit. t. XVII — Pelli. p. 116. — Volterrani. Com. Urban. l. XXI. — Serravalle ap. Cancel. p. 44.

(2) Manetti, Villani, Boccaccio, ec. ec.

me enim rei familiaris angustia; ut hæc et alia utilia rei publicæ derelinquere oporteat (1) — are his expressions: and they probably allude to the necessity of supporting himself by his diplomatic exertions, which curtailed much of his time and indeed, finally, his life, for it was the fatigue of his last vexatious embassy that killed him. Maffei ought rather to have remarked, that this document displays, not the magnificence of the Veronese, but Dante's admirable spirit of independance, which shrunk from remaining indebted to a man from whom he had experienced unkindness and whom he was determined never to revisit: and so repaid a hundred-fold whatever favours he had accepted from that Ducal minor, or his father and brothers, by attaching the name of Scala in front of the sublimest Canticle of his immortal work. Such an observation were the more applicable, from independance being one of those mental features which distinguish Dante among the votaries of Parnassus. Homer, it has been justly observed, is a national poet; Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso, courtly ones. These wrote to flatter the Cæsars, and the house of Este; but the Grecian, to celebrate the whole of Greece. Our Milton and Dante were even more universal and independent than Homer; for their compositions were to panegyrise no single nation; but to treat of topics nearly

(1) Dedic. p. 38.

equally interesting to all mankind. The Tuscan indeed often speaks of Florence, but such bursts of patriotism are rather accidental elucidations of the main subject, than any essential part of it. They are rarely flattering; and, in comparison with the whole poem, are both short and few: while as to the Paradise lost, I think, it does not contain one passage exclusively directed to England. If Can's largesses were (as is ridiculously pretended) the only cure for Dante's avarice, it was a desperate case. Nor was the prediction of that leader's political prowess any better founded, than of his domestic generosity. Far from curbing the licentiousness of the Papal power in any way, (to say nothing of chasing it from 'State to State' and freeing fair, fallen Italia) he consumed his life in bacchanal frivolity, and is to thank the Dante, whom his coarseness had dared insult, if his fame now extends beyond the local chronicles of a provincial town.

S. —— CVL.

Poor Dante's presages were, almost all, to be contradicted by the event: a circumstance that might have spared his answering to a charge of proficiency in judicial astrology. That portion of Italy, for which Nisus, Euryalus, Turnus and Camilla fell, was precisely the Papal territory; and this exact designation of it corroborates, more and more, my argument of the she wolf's meaning the ava-

ricious Popedom: but the downfal of her temporal usurpations was so far from taking place, that, of all the despotisms from the Alps to Sicily, the district whose regeneration he predicted, was precisely the one that was to groan most hopelessly: and was shortly to be so reduced, as to regret even its tyrant; who, leaving it in total anarchy, deserted to Avignon.

T. —— CXVI.

It is surely strange that we should dwell so much more forcibly on the shades of distinction between our opinions, than on the wide group of such as are common to us all. There seem to be no doctrines more contradictory than fate and freewill, for on none philosophers and divines have disputed with greater warmth: yet Cicero, with a little temper and logic, reduces the reasonable members of both parties to a confession that their only disagreement is in words, and that they are all substantially of one opinion (1). If that be the case in a controversy wherein at first view the contrast appears as strong as that between light and darkness, how much more must it be so in one which does not present even the appearance of important dissimilarities? Yet men seem to have acted on other principles, and often to have combated most inhumanly on the most frivolous pretences. Thus, two Orien-

(1) De fato p. XIX.

tal sects are said to have waged bitter war from a difference about washing their hands, —— les uns disant qu'il faut verser l'eau dans le creux de la main en la faisant couler le long du bras jusqu'au coude, et les autres qu'il faut au contraire jeter l'eau dans la jointure du bras et la faire couler en bas jusqu'à l'extrémité des doigts (1). Not only all Christians, but the principal framers of every system of ethics and religion, agree in this, that there is an Almighty Creator, with whom the virtuous are to enjoy eternal happiness, and from whom the wicked are to be banished for ever and consequently to be, in some way or other, for ever miserable. This sentence —— the substance of which remains untouched, whatever phraseology be employed, God, virtue or principle of good, or Satan, vice, or evil principle —— comprises the entire subject of the poem on which we are entering: and the last words of it that of the present Canticle, or rather of the largest portion of it, as shall be shown: and whether we call it 'Hell-of-the-damned' or Tartarus or Gehenna, it is still the self-same thing, —a place of everlasting woe believed in, with amazing unity, by the greatest law-givers, theologians and poets, from Moses and Homer down to Milton, and by the mightiest philosophers from Zeno and Socrates down to Newton; with the almost single exception of a few Epicureans,

(1) Hist. Mod. de Maury. V. 4. p. 338.

of whom Tully said, it was hard to determine which were more remarkable, their unworthy morals or their ignorance and imbecility (1). Amongst the Greeks, Romans, Jews, Christians and others, fire is principally, but not exclusively, represented as the instrument of future punishment: while the Magians reject it altogether, apparently from respect to that element, and the Mahommedans, for the most part, substitute cold in its stead, (2) a theory much followed by Dante and probably taken from the Koran with which book he appears to have been familiar, as I shall explain hereafter. But whatever be the station assigned, whether in the bowells of the earth, or in the viewless void, or beyond both space and time, or whatever be the tortures depicted, they, by all the religions I have noticed, are used as allegorical, and as finite representations of that which is infinite: whether flames, frost, vultures, hippocentaurs, chimæras, Styx, hunger, thirst, stench, serpents, dragons, or brimstone be employed; or it more than realise all these, to describe the bad spirit as cursed with the conscious horrors of her own identity; the same things are evidently signified, things of which we can have no conception, although our reason acknowledgeth their necessary existence; material substances that figure immaterial ones, and that would therefore be erroneous pictures, if, during

(1) Nat. Deor. l. 1. p. 44. —— Divin. l. 1. p. 3.
(2) Sale. p. 124.

our connection with the body, it were not so requisite to strike our senses in order to make an impression on our souls. They are then very puny reasoners, who, under pretence of wisdom, ridicule such imagery: while, on the other hand, those are wrong who prize too highly their own or condemn that adopted elsewhere. This is a theme on which we may be allowed to expatiate freely. Our fables cannot approach the truth; but they may indicate it imperfectly, as a word may do an entity. Nations quarrel not about their languages; I may call a ship what you name vaisseau, vascello or navis: nor do poets about their metaphors; one terming a ship a sea horse, and another a bird of the ocean: neither should people object with greater severity to each other's ideal pictures of the site or the form of a region or state, which, as they all agree, is beyond the utmost stretch of mortal comprehension. Those representations pass away with time and vary with fashion; but the truth they shadow forth remains unchanged because eternal, unconceived because infinite — opinionum enim commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat (1).

U. —— CXVII.

Boetius, who was a wonderful favourite with Dante, having used this expression *second death* to denote oblivion, such, it is likely, is its meaning

(1) Nat. Deor. l. 2. par. 2.

in this passage also; where the damned are therefore represented as fruitlessly desiring some oblivious antidote for their pangs — an antidote that might arise from the forgetfulness of their eternal judge, if it were possible for him to forget.

Quod si putatis longius vitam trahi
Mortalis aura nominis;
Cum sera vobis rapiet hoc etiam dies
Jam vos secunda mors manet (1).

Petrarch (whether imitating Boetius or Dante) uses the same form of speech in the sense of oblivion — chiamasi fama et è morir secondo. It is possible however that a verse in the Koran — « Death twice! O Malec intercede for us that thy Lord would end us by annihilation! » (2) — might have been in Dante's mind, and, in that case, he meant by second death the death of the soul or utter annihilation: but this is indubitable, that his second death means either oblivion, or annihilation of the soul; and not hell, which is the signification of that expression in the Apocalypse — « the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death » (3); and much less can it mean the Last Judgment, as is advanced by some expounders. In the one case, the damned cannot be said to be howling for it, since they are already in full and fearful possession of it; and in the

(1) De Con. l. 2. c. 7.
(2) Chap. 40—3.
(3) Rev. xxi. 8.

other, it were doubly improper to say they howl for it *in vain,* for they cannot have any reason to desire it, and, if they had such a desire, it would not be in vain; since come that Last Judgment will, and since their pangs shall be then increased, from their own increased capacities of suffering; as we shall have laid down expressly, by and by, in Canto VI. Nor is Buonanni's supposition tenable, that they deceive themselves and hope for that change, although it shall be worse for them; (1) that were to hold that hope is among the damned, whereas the very lines of Dante's own definition of their state declare that it admits of no hope —

Lasciate ogni speranza voi che 'ntrate!

But that the God of vengeance should forget them, or that their souls should die as well as their bodies, are, each, desires both natural and vain.

W. — CXIX.

Hope is that which distinguisheth a state of expiation, from one of utter ruin. This latter implies such ineffable misery that, if we did not know the contrary to be the fact, we might surmise that a doctrine so repugnant to human nature could never be long preserved except by that faith which is all-divine, and which might therefore (had it been the pleasure of the Divinity) ordain precepts

(1) I dannati bramano la gran sentenza perchè sperano in questa mutazione di trovarsi meno male. Dis. sopra l'Inferno p. 64.

unnatural in our estimation, with quite as much justice, as if they seemed natural: but as to a state of expiation, it is essential unto every system of social morals, and, under some shape or other, has been universally taught by all the varieties of faiths, heavenly or unheavenly, that have been in vogue at any period since the creation. Whether on this earth, or fluttering round it, or cooped within it, or in the sphere of flame; whether migrating through human or other terrene, or marine, or aerial bodies; (1) whether in a state where the pains are common, but the periods various, or where the pains are various, but the periods fixed to a thousand (2), or to nine hundred, or to seven thousand years (3); whether suffering from the action of fire, or transformed into its nature (4), or parching in the wind, or satisfying justice by the proportionate pangs of corporeal dissolution; in almost every hypothesis, ancient or modern, the soul must expiate the misdemeanors of mortality before she can enjoy God: and, to express this process, I see not why the term Purgatory be not at least as rational and classic as any. Dante necessarily adopted it; for it was the language of his day, which to change wantonly were, at best, af-

(1) Aeneid. l. 6. v. 741. — Servius. ap. Id. — Ascen. Id. —— Som. Scip. IX.

(2) Aeneid. l. 6. v. 748. —— Lactan. VII.

(3) Sale. p. 123.

(4) Id. p. 215.

fectation. Nor did it put a rein upon his imagination; since even the Council of Trent has not presumed to expound either the nature or situation of Purgatory, only deciding that some such place exists —— a prudent reserve and surely somewhat rashly criticized (1).

X. —— CXXII.

The purity of its Paradise is perhaps the most peculiarly sublime feature of Christianity. Yet was not profane Antiquity unfavoured by some glimpse of such celestial light; by which the divine mercy is fully exemplified: and it were erroneous to consider either the Olympus of the Iliad or Virgil's Elysium as intended to represent the seat of perfect felicity. In the latter are neither Gods nor Demi-gods: and as to the former, it is true it was the throne of Jupiter; but only of Jupiter son of Saturn, and not of the supreme Divinity under whatever names designated (for all of them, though differing in sound, conveyed but a single idea, that of an infinite, eternal Master) not of the World or Soul-of-the-World of the Stoics, not of the Deity of Plato, the Grecian Πρῶτον Αἴτιον, not of the Jupiter of Horace or Macrobius, of Him to whom the Ancients never raised a statue, professing they were restrained by reverence (2). Homer made his

(1) Sarpi. Storia del Con. Trid. l. 8. p. 397.

(2) Qui prima causa et est et vocatur, et unus omnium quæque sunt, quæque videntur esse princeps et origo est.... ideo ut nullum

Jupiter only a secondary cause and evidently believed in one superior, whom he seems to denominate Fate; to a consideration of whose essence his Muse does not attempt ascending: but he could not have imagined such a Being without surrounding him with unequalled fairness and bliss. Therefore Olympus was not the Homeric Paradise, using this word, Paradise, (which I shall continue to do) as synonimous with the imagination of highest happiness. If then, with regard to Hell, Purgatory and many parts of the pagan creed, the two chief poets of Greece and Rome are adequate authorities, with regard to Paradise, (on which they are nearly silent) we must consult the prose writers; and the Dream of Scipio includes most of what is to be learned from them. We there find, that the final retreat of souls beatified, or in the latin phrase glorydeified, for their virtues, (that is Paradise) extended as far as the milky-way downwards; and how much higher, beyond the fixed stars, is not said: but this is clear, that neither Olympus, nor any thing terrestrial, formed part of it. That visible firmament too was only figurative of something invisible, —— Nam si quid de his assignare conantur, quæ non sermonem tantummodo, sed cogitationem quoque humanam superant, ad similitudines et exempla confugiunt (1), —— in the same

ei simulacrum cum diis aliis constitueretur, finxit antiquitas.
Com. in Som. Scip. l. 1.

(1) Id. Id.

way as even the worthier conceptions of Christianity are but figures of that which « cannot enter into the heart of man » (1).

A splendid illustration of the goodness of the Creator it assuredly is, that the human race, notwithstanding their numerous iniquities, were enabled, partly by imperfect traditions, and partly by the mere force of unaided understanding, to retain so many vestiges of truth, that, after a similar preparation, nothing but corruption of heart, it would seem, could have prevented them from eagerly hailing the truth of truths, Christianity, the instant it was revealed to them. Hence to collate the multiplied religious allegories that have appeared on earth, and to reduce them to their real signification, as gathered, not from vulgar opinion but from their most enlightened professors, would be a discussion of great piety: for, as an illiterate man sees nothing in foreign tongues but confusion, while an expert linguist deduces order from their apparent disorder, and, possibly, arrives at the conclusion, that they have all sprung from a single root; so may a superficial consideration of dissonant creeds lead to infidelity, but, on the other hand, it appeared long ago to profound thinkers, that, that very diversity was a striking argument in favour of there being one true one (2).

(1) 1. Cor. 2. 9.
(2) De Nat. Deor. l. 2.

Such a work as I have hinted at, though a proper accompaniment to this poem, were obviously incompatible with comments, that, even without it, are likely to be too long. Yet shall I not fail, from time to time as the text suggests them, to enter into some cursory elucidations of my proposition: because the combination of allegories is one of the chief characteristics of Dante, particularly in the present Canticle; and because he has been arraigned for it, by some critics as irreligious, and by others as guilty of bad taste. But how it can be bad taste to bring in review the beautiful parables of Antiquity, I am at a loss to imagine: or how a writer, who dedicates his Muse to a confessedly orthodox exposition of the dogmas of his Church, can be condemned as deficient in religion; merely because he lavishes on it every artifice of decoration, and, faithful to its spirit, makes even those extraneous ornaments assist its lessons of benevolence and toleration, —— that social virtue too frequently, too calamitously transgressed, and of which he was one of the early Apostles.

Y—— CXXXI.

I take the liberty of using Duke continually in the sense which Dante gives to the Italian Duca, —— the old latin one of Dux, leader.

Our poet himself, in his dedicatory epistle to Can grande, expresses, as succinctly as can well be, the object of this entire, sacred poem; 'under-

stood literally, it treats of the state of souls after death, and allegorically it shows how man, being endowed with freewill, can merit, or by his good or his evil deeds, either reward or punishment': — Totius operis literaliter sumpti est subjectum status animarum post mortem; allegoricè sumpti, homo prout merendo et demerendo per arbitrii libertatem est justitiæ præmiandi et puniendi obnoxius (1).

Here I cannot withold the general observation, that the old commentators were much more conversant with the minor works of Dante, than many people suspect: for not only the words of his which I have just cited, but almost the whole production from which I borrow them, may be found in Boccaccio's comment; although he either did not choose or did not think it necessary to tell his audience he was translating the latin of his Author (2). This dedication to Can was hailed as a discovery, and critics used it as something new when quoting it as evidence in the long contested dispute about the title, Divine Comedy: but had people relied, as they ought,' on the authority of Boccaccio, they would have possessed Dante's own ideas on the matter from the beginning; for they are all in

(1) p. 35.

(2) È dunque il suggetto, secondo il senso litterale, lo stato delle anime dopo la morte; secondo il senso allegorico, è, come l'uomo, per il libero arbitrio montando e dismontando, è alla giustizia di guidardonare e di punire obbligato. Comento. vol. 1. p. 3.

the comment of Boccaccio, who, indeed, did little else than faithfully construe the latin before him into Italian, and fairly transcribe the Roman-written Greek into its proper Greek Characters. 'Comedy' (says Dante) 'means a country song, and therefore I call my poem a comedy; because it is written in no polished, learned language, but in the rude, living tongue intelligible to the lowest of the peasantry' ——Comædia dicitur a COMOS villa et ODA cantus; unde comædia quasi villanus cantus. (1) Per hoc patet quod Comædia dicitur præsens opus: nam humilis est loquendi modus, quia locutio vulgaris, in qua et mulierculæ communicant. But he raised Italian from that abject state: and the Italians have raised the title of his poem by adding to comedy the epithet divine. THE COMEDY OF DANTE ALIGHIERI, A FLORENTINE BY NATION, NOT MORALS: —— was the title-page composed by the Author, who, not even on such an occasion, could refrain from proclaiming his home with the affectionate pride of a patriot, though, at the same time, stigmatising the perverse factions that then dishonored it. This simple COMEDY was long retained; at length some editors changed it into THE COMEDY OF THE DIVINE POET, and others into THE COMEDY OF THE MOST DIVINE THEOLOGIAN DANTE ALIGHIERI; and at last, by shifting the adjec-

(1) Comedia vuol dire Canto di Villa, da κώμη villa et ᾠδή canto. Bocc. Comento. vol. 1. p. 5.

tive from the writer to his work, was produced the present form —— Divina Commedia —— DIVINE COMEDY, which is too generally adopted for me not to adopt it also; although well aware that it may displease many English readers at first sight.

Z —— CXXXIV.

Landino, and some of his predecessors too, pretended that this gate was to be interpreted that of Purgatory; and, although they could advance nothing plausible in favour of their interpretation, it has been followed by almost all the modern commentators, except Daniello and Biagioli. Virgil had offered to lead through Hell and Purgatory; and had subjoined only that he could not *enter* Paradise, but by no means that he could not approach within sight of its gate. Dante accepts this offer and answers, as shortly and modestly as he can, calling all the inhabitants of Hell and Purgatory sorrowers, and implying Paradise by an allusion to the text « Thou art Peter and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven (1). » To refer forwârd, with Venturi and the rest, to a Canto of Purgatory, where there is an Angel with keys, is to create a difficulty: for how should Dante now know that there is to be such an Angel there? Why should Dante be made so simple as to ask his Master to take him to the gate of Purgatory,

(1) S. Mat. xvi. 18—9.

after having heard him offer to take him through it? Milton considered it to mean the gate of Paradise certainly: for it is hard to believe, that the first English translator of Dante had not this poem uppermost in his memory, when writing —

> They pass the planets seven and pass the fixed
> And the crystalline sphere . . . . . .
> And now Saint Peter at heaven's wicket seems
> To wait them with his keys (1).

(1) Parad. Lost. b. 3.

COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE SECOND.

A. —— 1.

If the preceding Canto be a general introduction to the whole poem, this one is a prologue to its first Canticle, Hell; and prologue is the title it bears in some editions (1), which, in this particular, I follow, as perhaps more methodical. Virgil, after having, in the first Canto, extricated Dante from the allegorical forest and proposed to him an unearthly journey, now finds him shrinking from the emprize as too sublime. Upon this he tells him his journey is sanctioned by Providence; and that it was his own adored and sainted mistress, Beatrice, who descended from heaven to Elysium and said so. On which the pupil, replete with confidence and courage, calls on his master to lead on: and the Canto ends. As to the time, it is clear that a day has been consumed in the first Canto: so that it is now night-fall, April the eighth 1300 (2).

(1) Buonanni. Fiorenza. 1522.
(2) Comment, Hell, Canto 1. p. 24.

The opening verses are said (1) to be worthy of Virgil; it may be added they are manifestly borrowed from him,

Nox erat et terras animalia fessa per omnes
Alituum pecudumque genus sopor altus habebat,
Cum pater . . . . . .
Aeneas tristi turbatus pectore bello (2) etc.

The expression 'war' —— guerra (3) —— to denote moral difficulty, is much employed by Dante and by his countrymen after him: so Petrarch in his hymn to the Virgin ——

Soccorri alla mia guerra ——
'Oh! help me in my war'.

B. —— VI.

Mente che non erra is the original; which *non erra* shows that *mente* does not here signify generally the mind or intellect, but only that faculty of it which does not err, the memory: which is defined by Locke to be « the power to revive in our minds those ideas which were there before. » Hence it is clear that it cannot err; because when those old ideas are exclusively retraced, there is so far no error; and when we mingle them with new ones, it is some other intellectual power that we exert, although perhaps unconsciously, and not memory. And if we mistake in our estimate of

(1) Hist. Litt. d'Italie vol. 2. p. 32.
(2) Aeneid. l. VIII. v. 26.
(3) v. 4.

those ideas, the fault is in our judgment; and not in our memory. One may err from *want* of memory; but to speak of the *fault* of one's memory is quite illogical. It is then a very exact definition of memory, to call it that mental power which is faultless. Dante, having once given this precise notion of what he means by *mente*, mind, continues to use it, without further scruple, as synonimous with memory; as for example, only two lines lower ——

And thou, inditing mind!
O mente che scrivesti! ——

He found it probably a more convenient word than *memoria*: In the same peculiar sense, we ourselves also employ mind; as, time out of mind, or, we call to mind his covenant.

C. —— IX.

Nobility —— nobilitate —— is thus defined in the Monarchia: 'By virtue are men ennobled; —— by their own, or by that of their ancestors. According to the Philosopher, nobility is virtue and ancient heritage: and, Juvenal wrote —— nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus. Nobility then is twofold, personal and ancestral (1).' Dante aspired to them both: for, if he now claims the former for his intellectual endowments, we shall, hereafter, hear him challenging the latter, with the pride of

(1) p. 31.

elevated birth and the minuteness of a profound genealogist.

D —— XIII.

In the Original, *parente* is put for father, with a licence similar to one already noticed (1). It is a grand conception to represent the adventures of Aeneas, the glories of the latin worthies and imperial Rome herself, as the pre-ordained forerunners of Christianity: and no doubt but it is an improvement on the Virgilian exordium ——

Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.

E —— XXIV.

To appreciate much of what follows, it is necessary to consider this passage a little, not as detached from the context, but as strictly explanatory of it; and as purposely set down here, to be the head and front of an entire system: those therefore who pass it by cursorily are very likely to be puzzled hereafter, on coming to invectives poured out against the same See, which is at present mentioned with extreme veneration. Such praise and such blame may appear inconsistent to an inattentive reader; whereas they, on the contrary, afford the most luminous proof of our Author's unshakeable consistency. He was a devout believer in Catholicism; and a steady friend of liberty: how narrow

(1) Hell, Comment. Canto I. p. 38.

the course he had to steer, and what conflicting factions were to assail him, he must have foreseen; and he consequently employed every means that prudence could suggest to prepare for them,—but not successfully. It is the fate of most men, who write reasonably on a party question, to offend both sides; and they ought never to flatter themselves that they can attain any other recompense, than that of their own consciences and the assent of posterity. Present passions are against them; and the unimpassioned are too few and too quiet to be heard. But, above all mankind, this remark applies to Dante; who, in the most distempered age, undertook to discuss impartially the two most momentous and inflammatory of subjects, religion and politics: so that it is no wonder his character should be misunderstood abroad, when it was exposed to worse reproach at home; where his countrymen (however they may have extolled his speculative theology and his verses) only now slowly begin to do him some little justice as a political moralist; although he is certainly still more admirable in this latter character, than in that of poet. But, in order to curtail the argument, I beg of the reader (whatever may have been his habits of thinking) to concede for a while that our Author's objects were to panegyrize Christianity (or indeed rather the form of Christianity professed by Catholics (1)) and to advocate freedom; and,

(1) Fu il nostro Dante nasconditore di così cara gioja come è la

I dare believe, one will of himself adopt a similar opinion before proceeding far in these comments. It were superfluous to dwell upon the enormous abuses which had crept into the Roman Church (I pretend not to affirm in matter of faith, but, at least, of discipline) during some centuries, — abuses that, about the thirteenth, had attained their most crying excess. Even all Catholic historians agree in this; and vie in their abhorrence of a Pope's kicking off the diadem of a kneeling Emperor: no Sovereign secure, allegiance held sacred no where, « the papal power » (in Mr. Hume's words) was now at its summit in every kingdom of Europe (1). » At this period did Dante take up his pen against enormities which he deemed still more disgraceful to religion, than subversive of the civil rights of nations: and that his exertions were soon fruitful, is manifest from another passage in Mr. Hume, who says that Boniface (the very Pope against whom Dante wrote) « was among the latest of the sovereign Pontiffs that exercised an authority over the temporal affairs of Princes (2). » No doubt, but even a more substantial fabrick than one raised on mere opinion — fama potentiæ non sua vi nixæ — might melt away before less obstacles, than the varied

Cattolica verità sotto volgare corteccia nel suo poema. Bocc. Comento. vol. 1. p. 56.

(1) Hist. vol. 2. p. 510.

(2) Id. vol. 3. p. 86.

exertions of one of the greatest geniuses that has existed. Incalculable benefits thence accrued to society; but he himself lived not to witness them: for on him personally the controversy heaped calamities nearly as incalculable, the loss of home, fortune, friends, repose and health — leaving him no other consolation, than that of Milton for the sacrifice of his eyes:

Yet I argue not
Against heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask? —
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task (1).

He sets out then by terming the Papal, a holy throne; and the Pope, the legitimate successor of S. Peter: in which he asserts the belief of Catholics. And these reverential expressions agree with many others of the same nature up and down through all his works: so that, when even that wicked Boniface, whose name he introduces so horridly in the infernal gulf, —

Se' tu già costì ritto
Se' tu già costì ritto Bonifazio? (2) —

and indeed against whom he thunders unremittingly, is ignominiously put in prison by Sciarra Colonna, the poet, forgetting every thing else, and as if only alive to the insult done to the head of his

(1) Sonnet. XVII.
(2) Inf. Canto XIX.

church, and turning from a consideration of the unworthiness of the occupant, to horror at the impious attack upon the station, pronounces a malediction on the perpetrators of the sacrilege, and represents Christ himself as crucified anew in the person of his high-priest:

I see my Jesus mocked again
And drench'd again with vinegar and gall
And amid living robbers slain (1).

No doubt, he felt that the impiety of the Pope was no excuse for that of the assassins. Besides all which, he was so persuaded of the truth of his own Creed, and so scrupulously desirous of manifesting that persuasion, that he composed a paraphrastic version of the whole Roman Catechism, to accompany this poem; along with which we find it bound up in the earliest printed editions (2). Having thus shielded himself against attacks on his orthodoxy, he set out boldly on the achievement to which he seems to have thought it proper to dedicate, in a particular manner, his life and writings — to distinguish between the authorities spiritual and temporal, and to reprobate the Papal pretensions to this latter, as an unchristian usurpation. It were necessary to transport ourselves far back, to evils now lost in time, if we would form a correct idea of the difficulties of his undertaking. Almost all other re-

(1) Purg. Canto xx.
(2) Venezia, Vendelin da Spira 1477.

formers have permitted themselves to be impelled by circumstances somewhat beyond the limit, which their cool judgments had at first traced out: but he, without once swerving, continued on his work so steadily true to his ecclesiastical tenets, — justum et tenacem propositi virum — that this poem has defied the most microscopic inquisition; and, with all its severity against the Roman See, no Pope has, I believe, ever ventured to insert it in the nearly endless Index of condemned books. Yet surely nothing can be more tremendous than its denunciations. The opposer of every servitude, Dante was peculiarly so of the one which was the worst, because the most feared and the most general; other despotisms left at least part of society free, and, if there were multitudes of slaves, there were many masters also: but that of the Papacy spared no one, and kings and subjects were equally degraded by it. In assailing it, he felt he was on perilous ground; and that conviction buoyed him up to a constancy and fearlessness that must have seemed nearly supernatural to his contemporaries. A lion exulting in his strength, a Hercules redoubling his strokes on the hydra, he at last came off complete victor. But it required an implacable perseverance; and, in proceeding, even we, perhaps, shall be astonished at such inextinguishable animosity: contempt, irony, invective, (not only in Hell and Purgatory, but in the very Holy-of-holies, teh most sacred precincts

of Paradise) all the weapons of eloquence are put in requisition; not even excepting daring sarcasms, which, were it not for the important cause in which they are employed, would not escape reproof, as unworthy of the majesty of the place. For instance, after threatening the iniquitous Pontiff (whose wars, he says, were carried on not by the sword, but by a denial of the bread of life, that is, by an abuse of excommunications written, as he adds, only for the purpose of being razed as soon as their political object was gained) with the anger of the Apostles, who though martyred are not dead, he suggests to him, as a characteristic reply, the gross impiety, that he cared nothing about the Apostles; his hopes being all placed in S. Iohn-the-Baptist who was put to death for a dancing girl (Herod's daughter): by which is meant that they were placed in the gold florins of Florence, a coin that bore the image of that eremite:

What once was sword-work now is done
By a denial of that bread
The Sire of Mercy keeps from none:
O thou, who writest but to cancel, dread
The planters of the vine thou seek'st to cut!
Nor Paul nor martyred Peter's dead.
But answer bold: —— my hopes are put
In the great Eremite alone,
Who bled in Jewry for a slut;
To me your Paul and fisherman's unknown (1).

(1) Parad. Canto XVIII.

And, reproving the luxury of the priesthood, who, however, had not as yet learned to loll in their chariots, as they did afterwards:

Came Cephas, and came poor and bare
The Vessel elect in lowliest gait,
Unshod, content with any fare;
Not such our modern Pastors' state
With squires and toilets and to saddle-bow
Raised with labour —— Oh! men of weight!
Whose mantles down their palfreys flow,
A single hide upon a pair of brutes! ——
How far thy patience, Heaven, can go (1)!

But, since the subject on which we are touching is so necessary to be fully comprehended before going farther, I will not apologize for illustrating it by a passage from the Monarchia; both because the words are of Dante himself, and because I know no words of any writer which put the matter in a clearer light.

Having shown, in the preceding two books, that the Emperor is the rightful successor to the Imperial dignity, he, in the third, undertakes to prove, that there is no earthly Sovereign superior to him. But let me observe that, when he advocates that Imperial jurisdiction, he lays distinctly down what he understands by it; that is, an acknowledged superiority, not absolute power: and, far from any thing like military sway, he

(1) Parad. Canto xxi.

jealously contends, that the Emperor should not even be permitted to interfere with the particular constitutions of the country — animadvertendum sane, quod cum dicitur humanum genus potest regi per unum supremum principem, non sic intelligendum est, ut ab illo uno prodire possint municipia et leges municipales. Habent namque nationes, regna, et civitates inter se proprietates quas legibus differentibus regulari oportet. If the various nations, realms, and states of Italy were thus to have their own legislatures, and that there only was to be, for the common utility, a common chief to maintain the public concord, (as is continually repeated by Dante in pre-conformity to the sound, whig principle, cited more than once in the same page, that the people is not created for the sovereign, but on the contrary the sovereign for the people, — non enim gens propter regem, sed e converso rex propter gentem — ——— indeed the Emperor was, in point of substantial force, to be little more than what the President is in the United States, and the desire of our poet was really that of a federal commonwealth; which, if it had taken place, would have insured the independence of Italy and have suppressed the intestine conflicts between those 'democracies, oligarchies, and tyrannies that equally reduce the human kind into servitude, as is every where most evident' — democratiæ, oligarchiæ, atque tyrannides quæ in servitutem cogunt genus humanum, ut

ubique patet. It is no fault of his, therefore, if we must traverse the Atlantic for a model of federalism; which alone, perhaps, could have conferred durability on those turbulent republics and principalities, always in revolution and with a large portion of their population exiled, and whose sanguinary rapacity was at such a pitch, that they could never rest from petty yet cruel and obstinate wars undertaken, if there was no more plausible pretence to be discovered, for any thing however ridiculous, even for an old water-bucket (1). The reason for selecting the Emperor as that common Italian chief was obviously, because, as legitimate heir to the Roman diadem, he was the only individual in whose favour it was possible that the Italians might have united. In the third book he thus continues: 'Confiding in the promises made to Daniel, that the Divinity will be himself a buckler to advocates of truth; putting on the armour of faith, according to the admonition of S. Paul; heated with that burning coal, which one of the Seraphim took from the celestial altar and applied to the lip of Isaiah; and strengthened by the arm of Him, who, with his blood, redeemed us from the powers of darkness; I advance to the struggle in order to chase iniquity and lies from the face of the earth. Why should I fear? Spoke not the spirit of the co-eternal Father and Son, by the

(1) La Secchia Rapita.

mouth of David, « the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance, and shall not be afraid of evil tidings? (1) » —— Between two great luminaries am I called on to pronounce, between the Roman Pontiff and the Roman Prince; and to decide whether this latter (whom I have shown to be a legitimate Monarch) be dependant immediately upon God, or only mediately, through the interposition of the Vicar of God, I mean, of the successor of S. Peter, who truly is the bearer of the keys of the kingdom of heaven'..... And, having substantiated several irrefragable, but in our age superfluous arguments, touching the difference between spiritualities and temporalities, which it has ever been the chief policy of the Papacy to confuse, he thus winds up the whole —— 'Wherefore, imbued with the reverence that a pious child owes to his father, that a pious child owes to his mother, pious towards Christ, pious towards the Church, pious towards its Pastor, pious towards all the professors of the Christian religion, I say (to uphold what is the truth) that, of all earthly creatures, man alone is created for a double end, a corruptible one and an incorruptible. Unerring Providence then has destined him to a twofold felicity; that of this life, which is figured by the terrestrial Paradise, and which is attainable by the exercise of philosophy and virtue, and that of eter-

(1) Psalms cxii. 6.

nity, consisting in the fruition of the sight of the Divinity, and shadowed forth by the celestial Paradise, which cannot be merited by mere human virtues till they be aided by the grace of God. In unison with these two ends, we certainly require two rulers: — the Pontiff, whose duty it is to lead men, in conformity with revelation, to life everlasting; and the Emperor, whose business consists in the employment of philosophical ordinances to promote human welfare here below. Hence should the Emperor's principal object be the maintenance of public peace; which alone can insure us something of the slight, rare portion of content which is attainable, though with difficulty, in this our lowly sojourn, where people can expect no port whatever, until the present ocean of turbulence and cupidity be somewhat appeased. This earthly sovereignty is dependant upon God alone, is ordained by him, and has no other superior. Not that I should be understood to assert, that, absolutely in nothing the Roman Prince is to look up to the Roman Pontiff; for our mortal is but a type of our immortal happiness. Let Cæsar then testify that respect to Peter, which an eldest son should to his father: but as to unlimited command, it certainly belongeth *de jure* only to that Being on high, who is Ruler of every thing alike, spiritual and temporal (1).'

(1) Dantis Monarchia. Colon. Allob. 1740.

It follows, that when Dante expresses his obedience to the Pope, it is in a spiritual capacity, and that what he reviles is a temporal usurpation. This distinction is never kept in view by his enemies; nor even enough so by those who think more kindly of him. Yet is it the obvious duty of an annotator to give, not his own opinions, but, as fairly as he can discern them, those of his author. This I have endeavoured to do, and to mark clearly, at this outset, the line of thought which I find pervading his various writings; in order that it may serve as a general regulator in the explaining of a multitude of passages; which otherwise may easily be made diverge either to the one side or to the other of the fine pivot on which alone, it appeared to him, the scales of truth could maintain their equipoise: and against the commentator who would represent him as making any such divergence, whether favourable or unfavourable to the Pope, I am convinced, from my study of Dante's productions, (and I state his sentiments without meddling with the question, if they be right, or wrong) that he would equally protest, whether the comment were offered as matter of reprobation, or of encomium.

F. —— XXVIII.

Some of those who consider this fine proem as the product of judgment, as well as of fancy, (in which light it surely merits to be viewed) may,

perhaps, feel an objection to this close connexion between Aeneas and the Apostle: but not when they recollect the sublime purpose for which it is employed, the extolling of divine Providence and of Christianity. Nor is the position merely poetical; but is founded on history. Aware that Aeneas did not descend to hell, (it may even be no such personage ever existed) but that his descent was a creation of Virgil's sublime imagination, it was asked (on finding that Providence had not thought proper to deliver by the mouth of the inspired writers, either in the Old or New Testament, any more impressive notion of hell than is contained in the Aeneid) if it were unreasonable to conjecture, God, during the composition of that immortal volume, had deigned to impart a ray of truth to the penman, whose mighty powers must have been destined to answer some mighty purpose? It is certain, that to have the loftiest perception of celestial beatitude we must consult the Christian doctors: but it is equally certain that with regard to a futurity of woe, these present us with no more adequate imagery than the sixth book of the Aeneid. Had God intended we should have had any more adequate, he would have revealed it: and, not doing so, doth it not seem to follow, that what is known of those secrets came from Him, through whatsoever instrument? Such at least was a theological opinion once; so that here Dante wrote as a theologian as well as poet. Virgil evidently inculcates the propriety of

that supposed descent's being received as a *dream*; S. Paul says his ascent was in a *vision* — « I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. » He adds his ignorance of how that vision took place: « I knew a man in Christ about 14 years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven. » Is there not a shade of similarity between these relations? They were both raptures of the spirit: they both were intended to be figures of regions far beyond human conception, as well as human sight. To suppose something of a divine revelation in the Aeneid ought not to startle any reader of S. Austin at least; for he, in one of his homilies, maintains that Virgil was an inspired Prophet when he composed his fourth Eclogue: nor is that a peculiar opinion of Austin's. Almost all the Roman Catholic Fathers agree in considering that Eclogue as a clear and beautiful annunciation of the coming of our Saviour. But, if Virgil was filled with the spirit of God then, can it be wrong to suppose him so afterwards? Both of them may be fond persuasions; but if one is not impious, neither can the other be so. Or, is the sublimest portion of the sublime, all-embracing epic to be denied a prerogative conceded to that short pastoral? Irreligious I cannot call this tendency of Dante to connect, by a link not, at first, quite visible, things that, however distant from each other, present something in common

either great or good or both, and to refer them directly to the fountain of all greatness and goodness; while, as to that discursive fancy, which, never tired of ranging, gathers such a universal offering for the Christian altar, is it not admirable?

G. —— xxx.

I sometimes fear, that these comments are on a too extensive plan, and I then recal the words of the Convito, ——'leave something for a noble mind to find out of itself (1). But on the other hand I reflect, that, in judging a work composed so many centuries ago, it is necessary, not only to explain the text, but also the spirit with which it was written, and that to penetrate this spirit, it is frequently necessary to be minute. It sems to me, that, if a poet be meritorious in being concise, his commentator is often so in being diffuse; the former may tersely indicate ideas and events familiar in his time, which the latter (if he be more intent on doing his duty than on displaying his wit) should patiently develope, and be less afraid of saying five words too much, than one too few. This remark is peculiarly applicable to the attempt at acquiring an insight into an old author's habits of thought, by which, when once attained, a reader comes so prepared to the consideration of a disputed point, that he, perhaps, construes without difficulty pas-

(1) Al nobile ingegno è bello un poco di fatica lasciare. p. 117.

sages, whereupon abler critics than he had laboured vainly: now, such an insight is better got at by the scrutinizing sifting of a few opinions, than by a more enlarged, but less anxious operation. Such are the sentiments that engage me to stop at this thirtieth verse of the original —'faith which is the first step in the road of salvation'— and to remark, that it does not say, that faith is the road to salvation, but only that it is the first step in that road: which, I am convinced, was so worded designedly, and not so much either to imitate a passage in S. Austin, or to enforce the necessity of faith, (a want of which was no evil then in vogue) as that of *good works*, by implying, that, without these, very little advance can be made towards Paradise, since faith is only a single step: in order to prepare his audience to join with him hereafter in those vehement reproofs, which he directs against such as, relying on the purity of their belief, hold themselves dispensed from an active exertion of the charities of our nature. He may have here alluded to the expostulations in the Bible (1): But two reflections must have particularly actuated him; one, that the tenet he thus condemned had been already pronounced heterodox by the chiefs of his religion — a consideration sufficiently strong in a poem purporting to embrace the numerous Catholic dogmas; and the other

(1) James. II. 14.

that it appeared subversive of civil society. To him it was moreover peculiarly obnoxious, as forming a perfect contrast with his principles and practice: both of which engaged him to unite entire fidelity to his own church, with much tolerance towards that of others. Of the multiplied instances on which my present observation is founded, I shall only notice two; one of them taken from this same poem, and one from his metrical translation of the Nicene Creed. 'Numbers' (he exclaims in Paradise) 'are there of those who ejaculate Christ! Christ! and yet on the great Judgment Day shall fall far below many that never heard of Christ. Yea! the Ethiopian shall then damn the Christian; the former entering the realm of eternal glory, and the latter undone for ever (1). And, in the Creed, he expressly goes out of his way to paraphrase Deum Omnipotentem by 'God who can do all things and from whom ever proceed all those blessed graces that produce *good works* (2).'

H. —— LII.

The Catholic 'Limbo-of-the-holy-fathers' is defined by Aquinas as a region of peace, exempt from all sense of pain and enjoying the blessing of divine grace, but not of ineffable beatitude (3): and he

(1) Parad. Canto XIX.
(2) I sette Salmi di D. A. p. 137.
(3) D. Tom. Aquini. Sen. p. III. p. 389. Ed. 1698.

agrees with S. Austin (1), and indeed S. Paul (2) also, in representing that Limbo, or Abraham's bosom as being situated in Infernus or hell. In it Virgil also placed Elysium; so that, when he himself is put there, it is both justly and kindly done: — justly, because, as I have this moment said, it is in a division of hell that he puts the ancient worthies of Greece and Rome, and not in the Paradise of Heathenism, which was the milky-way, as we learn from the philosophers and indeed from Virgil himself in the fourth Eclogue; kindly, because, although we shall perceive a great resemblance between Limbo and Elysium, yet shall we find the former more placidly atractive; since the boisterous introduction of steeds and chariots gives way to the purer and spiritualizing imagery of Christianity. Should it be objected, that the Aeneid is a poetic fiction, but that the ecclesiastical authorities of Paganism elevated some of its votaries, under the title of Demi-gods, to a participation of celestial bliss, (as Romulus or Scipio for example) it might be answered that also Dante is writing poetry; were it not that, in truth, he disclaims any such excuse, and prefers to every other glory that of displaying the characteristic charity of his faith. Therefore he too (probably for the sake of the principle, rather than merely to honor those individuals) makes exceptions in favour of a few distinguished Pagans:

(1) De Civit. Dei. Lib. xx.
(2) Romans. x. 7.

so that, if he now leaves Virgil in Limbo, we shall find him, as he advances, enlarging at every step the horizon of benevolence; not so much by the ardour of his fancy, as by a mixture of prudence and learning, qualities that make him be looked upon by the Roman Church as one of its most venerable theologians, and indeed sometimes be designated by the title, not of a poet, but of a most divine theologian, as I remarked in my comment on the preceding Canto (1); whence he shall at last present us with Trajan among the saints, (without violating the doctrine of Catholicism, as shall be elucidated) and with Cato on his way thither, in Purgatory; him of whom it hath also been written in the Convito, 'Sacred, holy, bosom of Cato! who shall presume to speak of thee? For me, I know no eulogy befitting thee, on an occasion like the present, when I am precluded from being diffuse, except that of S. Jerome on S. Paul in his preface to the Bible, the eulogy of silence (2).'

'Our calm suspended being' — color che son sospesi — is borrowed seemingly from the Mohammedan doctors, who, having a limbo very similar to that of the Catholics, call it « al Arâf, a word derived from the verb arafa, which signifies properly to separate or raise (3); » so that al Arâf means a place suspended between Paradise

(1) p. 64.
(2) p. 153.
(3) Sale p. 125.

and the Hell-of-the-damned: and that conveys a just idea of this Limbo, which, we shall find, may be termed suspended in three several senses —as being a counter-poise between joy and sorrow; as having held the Patriarchs in a state of suspense; and as over-hanging the infernal abyss. That to this Limbo Saints and Angels (1) make frequent visits, was once an opinion of the Franciscan friars, and is so still, I suppose; so that Dante, in making 'a gentle fair' descend thither from Paradise, did nothing theologically irregular.

I. —— LV.

The Original is la stella 'the star': which is after the manner of the Greeks, who named the sun, ἄστρον, the star by excellence; a mode of expression followed by Boetius in latin, for he calls the sun simply sidus (2), and by Dante in Italian, not only on the present occasion, but also in one of his Canzoni (3).

Os olhos com que o sol escurecia
'Those eyes at which the sun grew dim'

—— wrote Camoës (4); but, long before him, another Portugese (Bernardes) had transplanted from

(1) Sarpi. Storia del Con. Trid. l. 2. p. 165.
(2) Vel cur hesperias Sidus in undas
Casurum rutulo surgat ab ortu.
De Consol l. 1. cap. 2.
(3) La bella stella. Rime. p. 200.
(4) Sonetto. LXXXXIX.

Dante's Italian this hyperbole of eyes outshining the sun ——

A luz 'que faz o Sol escurecerse (1) ——
'The light that makes the sun grow dim.'

K. —— LIX.

In the text there is, between the oldest editions, a petty disagreement not worth a translator's attention; since, be the true reading *moto*, or *mondo*, the signification is, in substance, the same —— the roll of the world, or the rolling world. I would however venture to propose the insertion of a comma after moto, or mondo: by which means quanto'l moto or mondo, being included between two commas, as in a parenthesis, ceases to govern lontana; which therefore, ceasing to be a very dubious kind of verb, resumes its usual title of adjective and agrees in case, gender and number with fama ——

Di cui la fama ancor nel mondo dura
E durerà, quanto 'l moto, lontana: ——
mondo,

That is, di cui la lontana fama dura ancor nel mondo e durerà, quanto il moto, o il mondo: 'whose distant fame still lasts in the world, and shall, as long as motion, or the world itself.' Lontana is an epithet quite naturally given to fama,

(1) Rimas. Son. XXIII.

'distant or wide-spread fame'. As the lines are at present stopped ——

Di cui la fama ancor nel mondo dura
E durerà, quanto 'l moto lontana: ——
mondo

lontăna is explained to be a verb neuter put for si lontana, and in the Vocabolario is declared synonimous with si stende in lungo: whereupon it is generally construed —— 'whose fame shall last as long, as motion or the world shall continue moving itself to a distance.' But this does not seem to me to furnish clear ideas. Since the spheres move in a circle, as Dante says, —— gira un corpo —— why should they be described as going from us to a distance, rather than as coming to us? Then I do not think it happy, to make Dante here use as a verb neuter lontanare, which I find him every where else using either as active or reflective, like the rest of Italians. Indeed the Academicians cite no other authority than this very verse for the employment of that verb in a neutral sense. Then, even were the interpretation not loose, yet it would seem to me an easier matter to insert a comma, (if one be indeed necessary to my proposal of considering lontana as a simple adjective) than to have recourse to a kind of grammatical licence, or to at least a novelty, by making lontana be considered as the third person singular of a verb neuter. I, however, am almost afraid of suggesting even this trifle in a text so often revised by the

learned: were it a matter of consequence, I should not, certainly, have any such presumption —— sed hæc nos cognovimus esse nihil.

L. —— LXX.

Some moderns have exerted their ingenuity in endeavouring to prove Beatrice entirely a creation of fancy; as if it were an enhancement, both of the poet's merit, and of his theme, to consider her as having no connection whatever with mortality. But in this they are at variance, if not with taste and nature, at least with historical matter of fact: for not only Dante himself tells us in various passages what she truly was, and where she was born, and when and how she died, but his ancient commentators agree in their account of her name and family. Thus writes one of them: 'As to Beatrice, you must know that in truth she was a Florentine lady, to whom Dante in his youth was greatly attached, and for whom he composed many moral songs and sonnets. The girl was daughter of a well known nobleman, Folcho Portinari, and wife of Messer Simon de' Bardi; .... but in this poem you are to understand her as personifying sacred theology (1).' —— But Dante wrote prose for

(1) Chi fosse Beatrice è da sapere, che nella verità questa fu una donna di Firenze, la quale Dante amò con grande affectione et fece per lei molte cose in rima, canzoni morali et ballate. Fu questa giovane figliuola di Folcho Portinari e moglie di Messer Simone de'Bardi: .... ma intende per questa Beatrice la santa teologia.

Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016.

her as well as rhyme; and the history, he has left us of his strangely pure and exalted courtship and of her decease, is (with the exception of verses interspersed here and there) in prose burning with the very essence of love, and, at last, melting with the tenderest sorrow. It is indeed an enchanting volume, and discovers that intense glow of refined passion, which Rousseau alone has sometimes equalled, when it may be with fullest justice said of him that

with ethereal flame
Kindled he was(1).

But alas! the Genevese experienced only the lightning of a disordered brain that blasted him; his heart remained unvisited by any holy warmth; and even his most spiritual creations are such, as morality cannot avoid censuring. Not so Dante: whose affections were at first engaged naturally by a fellow-creature; and, when death rendered the object of them ideal, it only gave a loftier elevation to both his heart and genius; nor did his pen transgress his own precept, that, 'a Gentleman should never use an expression improper for a female to hear'——il pudico e nobile uomo mai non parla sicchè a una donna non fossero oneste le sue parole (2). In the composition alluded to above, (the Vita Nuova) he, more than once, enters into details both as to the person and dress

(1) Childe Harold. Canto III.
(2) Convito. p. 199.

of Beatrice —— 'she was of a sanguine complexion, and wore a girdle and such other ornaments as became a girl of her tender age (1):' and he tells us they were both in their ninth year, she just commencing her's and he closing his, when first they met —— dal principio del suo nono anno apparve a me, ed io la vidi quasi al fine del mio —— an event which, according to Benvenuto of Imola, took place at a ball given by her father on a May-day; to which the little Dante accompanied his parents —— puerulus IX. annorum ibi vidit a casu, inter alias puellulas, puellulam cui nomen erat Beatrix ætatis VIII. annorum, miræ pulchritudinis, quæ subito intravit cor ejus, ita quod nunquam postea recessit ab eo donec illa vixit (2). 'After that' (continues the young author of the Vita nuova) 'I had several casual glimpses of the juvenile angel, but at a distance; so that I had never yet been blessed with the music of her voice: when, one evening, (it was the very last of my ninth year) I observed the glorious creature, who indeed, as Homer represents Helen, seemed, not so much the offspring of any mortal, as of a God, come out to take a walk in company with two elderly ladies. Her dress I remember was white. Passing along the street, her eyes happened to fall upon me in the corner where I stood gazing and trembling vio-

(1) Cinta, ed ornata, alla guisa che alla sua giovanissima età si convenia. p. 1.

(2) Com. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. t. 1.

lently; when, with that ineffable courtesy, which has already obtained its unfading recompense in Paradise, she condescended to make me a curtsy, and to address me in a few words of so much virtue and kindness, that they transported me, as it were, to the extreme of rapture. Nothing can efface that moment from my memory: it was precisely nine o'clock. That, as I have said, being the first time I caught her dulcet accents, there came over me such a sensation of sweetness, that, inebriated with pleasure, I retired from the crowd to my little, lonely room; and shut myself up in order to muse at my leisure upon one so courteous and beautiful. Ere long, I experienced a slight slumber attended by a strange dream. Methought there entered the chamber a flame-tinged cloud, and, within it, stood a personage on whom, albeit his aspect was terrible, I could not avoid gazing steadfastly. It was a marvel how dazzling he seemed with joy: and several words did he utter in latin, of which I only comprehended these, *Behold thy Lord!* In his arms appeared a form sleeping, and naked, with the exception of a light crimson drapery, in which it was wrapt up: and looking on it with attention, I at length recognised the lady of my soul, her who had deigned to salute me that evening. Then he who bore her seemed, in one hand, to hold something all on fire; and turning to me pronounced again in latin —— *see thy heart!* After some pause he apparently

awoke her who slept; and endeavoured with much art to persuade her to eat of that which burned in his hand; so at last she began the eating of it, though as if doubtingly. But it was not long before the lordly figure, who had been so brillant and festive, dissolved in a flood of tears, and, weeping bitterly, folded up that lady again in his arms and appeared to fly away aloft with her to heaven; leaving me in such a fit of anguish that I awoke.'—— Upon this he composed a sonnet, which is really very pretty, and, considering it was the production of a mere child, astonishingly so: its last lines are these ——

Allegro mi sembrava Amor, tenendo
Mio core in mano, e nelle braccia avea
Madonna, involta in un drappo dormendo.
Poi la svegliava, e d'esto core ardendo
Lei paventosa umilmente pascea;
Appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo.

It was (as I have said) immediately published, though without a name; so that, it is certain, we have it in its original state free of any subsequent correction. The author's own account of the affair is: —— 'many replied to my anonymous verses in various ways, and, amongst them, he whom I always designate as my *first* friend. His reply was also a sonnet beginning Vedesti al mió parere ec. and it was indeed upon this occasion that the friendship between us originated; for he came and sought my acquaintance, as soon as he

knew it was with me he corresponded.' The sonnet just referred to is printed as the twentieth in the works (1) of Guido Cavalcanti, a Florentine chieftain of prime rank, both as to birth and fortune and talents, and who then stood in fine almost without a rival, whether in poetry, philosophy, or politics. He was besides, at the least, thirty years of age; for he is known to have been married a few months after our author's birth; so that their romantic and steady attachment is nearly equally honorable to them both; to the boy who deserved it, and to the man who delighted to do homage to the genius of a boy: for perhaps genius itself is not rarer than such perfect candour and disinterestedness.

I am aware, that there have been several who produced tolerable poetry very young: and that the old proverb — nascitur poeta, orator fit — has more truth in it than seems fashionable to be avowed. A life of study, and opportunities to traverse a wide field of observation are requisite to form a *great* poet certainly: but the faculty peculiarly poetic exists probably in the cradle, or never. The seed may be long latent, for numerous are the causes, moral as well as physical, that may choke it: but where nature herself has not sown the seeds of poetry, no care and culture can produce it. Something better perhaps than poetry

(1) Rime p. 11.

may be so produced, but yet not poetry. Richness of fancy, inexhaustible stores of knowledge, the utmost promptness of combination and entire dominion over his language did not make a poet of Mr. Burke; nor of a still greater man, Cicero. Where the tendency to become one exists, it is likely, that it developes itself early; or that, if it does not, there is some casual impediment preventing it. A poet born is, it may be supposed, inclined, like Ovid, 'to lisp in numbers' as fast as he acquires ideas and words. Words are of quicker growth than is often imagined; to prove which, it is enough to instance Tasso, who never possessed his language better than in his early boyhood and when he wrote his Aminta, or Mr. Pope, who was never more master of English or more melodious and correct as a versifier than in his Windsor-forest: besides, were it otherwise, yet that simple phraseology, (adapted even to the sublimest conceptions of the muse, as Homer and Shakespere show) which is attained by every child, suffices to clothe simple thoughts; and some of the prettiest verses extant contain nothing else. As to ideas, though they can be but few at a very juvenile period, yet a few do for a short poem; and may be even more vivid then, because novel. Some of the earliest may spring from keen relish for beauty: at least, objects that strike chiefly by their exterior may strike most forcibly on first sight; and how many such beautiful objects are

to be seen as soon as we open our eyes, the fields, birds, air etc.! Amongst them surely may be ranked high a singularly gifted human form; and it may create love and veneration, long previous to the possibility of any sexual desire. A perception of moral beauties, which act not immediately upon the outward senses, is less easily gained, and can be but the result of frequent reflection or of information reaped from men or books: yet even this shows itself prematurely, as in the instance of Pope's ode to solitude, a solemn disclosure of feelings more recondite far than Dante's attachment to Beatrice. *This* is sufficiently accordant with the jocund buoyancy of childhood and the fervid imagination of a nascent minstrell: but *that* exhibits a melancholy unnatural at such an age, unless we attribute it, in some measure, to bad health and redundant timidity. Not that I mean to put the two writers on a parallel: our countryman was considerably less young; yet was he enough so to justify my believing, that his performance revealed greater powers than he afterwards exerted, when, with almost a single exception, he was unfortunately induced to give up poetry for criticism and originality for translation. Yet in spite of every exemple that can be cited, as a deduction from our amazement, this sonnet and passion of Dante at nine years of age must be classed among curious natural phenomena: and Ginguené's mode of accounting for the matter is quite

inadmissable — il prit pour elle un de ces goûts d'enfance que l'habitude de se voir change souvent en passions (1); for it is manifest from the book we are considering, that he never enjoyed her society habitually, but, on the contrary, had rarely an occasion of seeing her and still more rarely one of speaking to her. He thus describes his feelings in her presence: 'on every occasion that I beheld her and expected she would notice me by a word or curtsy in passing by, I experienced a sensation of inexpressible benevolence. I had no longer an enemy in the world; and such a flame of charity consumed me, that I could not but have pardoned whomever had given me any offence. Whosoever had asked me any favour upon earth, I could not have denied him; but would have answered in the affirmative, with a heart glowing with good-will and a cheek flushed with humility. When I perceived her about to salute me, methought, I felt a spirit of love run tingling along my members and mounting up to my eyes; whence, after destroying every other sensitive faculty, it seemed to chase away even my enfeebled visual powers, as if it sent them forth to do homage to their sovereign lady; so that nothing remained there but the pure spirit of Love himself; and any one, who wished to see the God, would have only had to look upon the tremour of my pupils at that moment. But when she was

(1) Hist. Litt. d' Italie. vol. 1. p. 440.

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actually addressing me, not even Love, who stood as umpire between us, could shelter me from a flood of intolerable beatitude, of irresistible sweetness, which, streaming impetuously from her, did so entirely overcome my physical strength, that my body was often observed to stagger, as if deprived of life. In fine it was most apparent, that in her was centered my whole happiness; and that, that happiness overwhelmed me and was frequently superior to my capacity of endurance.' On one of those occasions he wrote a sonnet, which I shall transcribe: because, although composed so many hundred years ago, it partakes nothing of the darkness which time has unavoidably cast upon much of Dante's construction, nor a single antiquated word; but has indeed as fresh an air, as though it were culled yesterday, if we merely except *vestuta* for *vestita* in the sixth line and in the eighth understand an indefinite article before *miracol*, as *a mostrare un miracolo*: because Petrarch evidently imitated it, when he wrote best; and would sometimes have written better, if he had kept closer to his model: because it shows, what is overlooked in general, that not only Italy's narrative, but also its lyric poetry is to consider Dante as its true founder; and that, if he could not cultivate the latter at great length, he at least produced an example worthy of the rivalship of posterity: and, in short, because I am unacquainted with any finer specimen of the short poem, which

Italian scholars pronounce to be of more difficult execution than any other.

'So gentle, so pure and noble is the aspect of the Lady of my heart, while she maketh a salute, that not a tongue but trembling becometh hushed, and there are no eyes which have the boldness to fix her with their gaze; clad with honor and modesty, she departeth hearing whispers in her encomium; and seemeth a creature descended from heaven to earth, to prove there is such a thing as a miracle. Such kindness doth she breathe when one looketh on her, that it sendeth through the eyes to the heart a sweetness incomprehensible to all but him alone who doth feel it: and it seemeth, as if there fluttered along her lip a tender spirit replete with love, which is unceasingly saying to the soul, sigh'.

Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare
La Donna mia, quand'ella altrui saluta;
Ch'ogni lingua divien, tremando, muta;
E gli occhi non l'ardiscon di guardare.
Ella sen và, sentendosi laudare
Umilemente d'onestà vestuta:
E par, che sia una cosa venuta
Di cielo in terra, a miracol mostrare.
Mostrasi sì piacente a chi la mira
Che dà per gli occhi una dolcezza al core,
Che 'ntender non la può, chi non la pruova;
E par, che dalle sue labbia si muova
Un spirito soave pien d'amore
Che và dicendo all'anima: sospira.

Her father's death, with his virtues and popularity, is noticed, —— il suo padre che fu creduto (e vero è) buono in alto grado —— and the date evidently assigned to it agrees with the inscription not long since discovered on his tombstone, 1289. It was then the custom in Florence to have large funereal meetings in the house of the deceased, whose next relation attended there to receive condolence. This, I suppose, was once the general fashion throughout Europe; since I have found it still established in all its primitive rigour in Portugal, —— the country to which many usages of our ancestors seem to have retreated for final refuge. This is a very dreary one: and probably even still more annoying to those who are oppressed with real grief, than to those whom decency obliges to feign it. Every evening, for an entire month of 1814, a young and handsome widow of Oporto presided at the upper end of a long room, with a single, small, veiled lamp on a table before her; while downward from her arm-chair extended two parallel rows of seats for the company. These, both on entering and retiring, made a silent bow; nor spoke a syllable during the visits. The ladies occupied the chairs on the right, the gentlemen, those on the left. All were in deep mourning, as well as the fair mistress, who occasionally applied a handkerchief to her eyes; although doubts were entertained as to her sincerity. But melancholy above description was

another mourning scene of which I was a witness in the same city — a mother bereft of her only son. She was an Englishwoman married to a Portugese: yet was she obliged to undergo that cruel ceremony, although her husband had considerately sought to avoid it, by conveying her immediately to the country and remaining there for above six months. On the very evening following her return, carriages assembling at her door, she was necessitated to conform to the custom and have her sorrows intruded on and anew worked up by that funeral pomp for thirty successive nights; while, such was the shattered state of her nerves, that it was surprising she did not fall a victim to her repeated struggles with that frenzy of affliction, which it is horrible to feel, but still more horrible to endeavour to control, as she was forced to do. Thus convulsed with true grief, or rather with a heart bleeding even, if possible, still more poignantly, because more freshly, than that distracted mother's, Beatrice is described as exhibiting a picture of consummate wofulness. There was this difference from the Portugese, that the two sexes seem to have occupied separate apartments; her brother acting as chief mourner in one, and she in the other. Hence Dante could not see her: but, taking his seat close to a door by which the female visitors passed in and out, he hearkened with eagerness to their remarks. 'Which of us ought ever again smile after be-

holding such affliction?', asked one: 'indeed it is enough to make one die with pity', replied her companion. On this, he too burst into tears, covering his face with his hands to hide them: and his desire to betake himself to some secluded spot, where he could let them flow without impropriety, conflicted with that of remaining where he was, in order to have momentary news of her. There he continued: but, unable to prevent his emotion from being observed, he at last caught whispers of which he himself was the subject: —'poor young lad! how changed! he no longer appears the same person'. In fact he was on the eve of a severe illness caused by distress of mind. During the worst paroxysm of the fever on the ninth day, (a number strangely connected with his joys and sorrows) while reflecting on the extreme fragility of human life, the thought for the first time came across him that even the sweet Beatrice must one day die — di necessità conviene che anche la gentilissima alcuna volta si muoja. This threw his frame into new disorder, and he fell into a terrifying delirium; the earth appearing to shake, the sun to be discoloured and the stars to shed tears; while a crowd of haggard women seemed yelling —'thou shalt die! thou art already dead!' Then he thought one of his friends approached and said low and mournfully —'hast thou not heard it? thine admirable lady is no more!' He instantly broke forth into an agony of tears, (real

tears and not imaginary like that which caused them) and, gazing on high, he fancied he beheld a multitude of angels returning up towards heaven, preceded by a thin, milkwhite cloud and singing hosanna to God. Then did his conscious heart tell him (his heart ever full of so much love — ov'è tanto amore) 'alas! it is but too certain, our lady is dead'. Hereupon the scene shifted; and he seemed to be visiting her corse; when so potent became that delirious, erroneous phantasy, — la erronea fantasia — that he thought he saw damsels covering it with a white veil, and, drawing near, he recognized its wonted air of humility on its face, which moreover appeared to assure him that its soul was already ascended to eternal peace. His voice then raised itself, and sobbing bitterly he ejaculated repeated invocations to Death and Beatrice: so that his nurse-tenders, attributing his cries to the violence of distemper, began to cry also from their apprehension that he was expiring. Returning to his senses, he was grievously ashamed — mi vergognai molto: but, when asked what it was had frightened him, he took courage flattering himself the secret of his heart had not been divulged; and that, though his words had been overheard, they were not understood. He recovered: and there is recorded one more interview between him and his lady, in presence of the wife of his dear Guido Cavalcanti. On the subject of Beatrice's marriage, he is completely silent; and

from some of his expressions it has even been attempted to prove she died a maid. But Boccaccio's testimony to the contrary is absolute; and to dispute it were very bold. He may, it is true, occasionally add a little colouring to his sketches; but when he states a thing as simple matter of fact, I cannot imagine how any one can be arrogant enough to dispute it, unless he can produce convincing proof of the impossibility of its being true. So far from that being the case at present, his assertion is confirmed by other contemporary witnesses. We must therefore believe that she was a wife, at least a short while before her death; and pardon her unfortunate admirer for saying nothing about it. The ravings of his fever were ominous and preceded her demise by only about four or five months at most. 'This took place' (he says, with the all-punctilious minuteness of a spirit-stricken mourner) 'at seven o'clock on the morning of the ninth of June; which month' (adds he with the superstition often generated by profound melancholy) 'is the ninth of the twelve, according to the mode of reckoning in Syria: so that it is clear that this heavenly number, nine, had always a favourable influence on her destiny; and now in the end it conveyed her to Paradise'. It was in the year 1290, writes Boccaccio; and the same is implied in Purgatory, Canto xxxii; but the way of registering it in the Vita Nuova is studied, in order to introduce another sorrowful and indeed fan-

tastic, though Ciceronian instance of the influential nine: 'it was in that year of the thirteenth century when the perfect number was completed nine times'. The perfect number is 10, as Macrobius informs us(1); hence 10×9=90, and 90+1200=1290. She had then just entered her twenty-fifth year. To dwell on our poet's distress were nearly superfluous. Indeed the chief production in which he revealed it is no longer extant, or at least not known to be so: it was in latin, 'addressed to the rulers of the land', and opening with the lamentation of Jeremiah, —— « How doth the city sit solitary! how is she become as a widow (2)! » —— a strain of elegy well adapted to the subject, because, as he avers, the lovely saint was wept sadly not by him alone, but by every Florentine —— lacrimando nella disolata città. Suffice it to say, his sorrow was of the severest and most durable in nature: upon the anniversary of her decease we find him singing her dirge in accents broken with grief 'Oh! noble-minded creature, it is now a year since thou didst mount to heaven' ——

O nobile intelletto!
Oggi fa l'anno, che nel Ciel salisti;

and, bursting into tears continually as if his eyes were made for no other purpose, these at last acquired a purple rim such as is sometimes pro-

(1) Decas perfectissimus numerus est.
Com. in Som. Scip. l. 1. cap. 6.

(2) Lamentations I. 1.

duced by violent pain —— per lo lungo continuare del piánto dintorno a loro si facea un colore purpureo, lo quale suole apparire per alcuno martire. This continual weeping, indeed, almost degéne-rated into an incurable malady: twenty years had elapsed, when a mere thought of her could still produce a magical effect, making him thrill with the potent consciousness of former love (1); and scarcely once, during full thirty years that he survived her, was he ever known to smile.

She's gone! our Beatrice is gone
To heaven amid the angel-kind;
She lives in that high realm of bliss
And leaves you, ladies, all behind!

The Lord enamoured of her charms
Has called her for his own delight;
And deemed this lowly world of ours
Unworthy of a thing so bright (2).

(1) D' antico amor senti la gran potenza.
Purg. Canto xxx.

(2) Ita n' è Beatrice in l'alto cielo
Nel Reame ove gli Angeli hanno pace,
E sta con loro, e voi, donne, ha lasciate:
. . . . . .
Che fè maravigliar l'eterno Sire;
Sicchè dolce desire
Lo giunse, ...
E fella di quaggiuso a sè venire:
Perchè vedea ch' esta vita nojosa
Non era degna di sì gentil cosa.
p. 37.

In one place, he blames his eyes for ever ceasing to weep before death —— mai, se non dopo la morte, non dovrebbero le vostre lacrime essere ristate: and in another, as if in compassion of himself, he sings

How oft my weeping and my sighs
My ever-flowing, bitter brine
Brought pity's dew to other eyes,
You saw yourselves, O eyes of mine!

Some pilgrims on their way to Rome passing through Florence, (the city where sweet 'Beatrice was born and lived and died' —— dove nacque e visse e morì) he was struck with their air of composure in traversing a spot, which, he thought, ought to excite agonizing sensations in every bosom, as well as in his own; and he said to himself: 'if I could but speak to them, I should soon set them weeping; for my words have power to make any one weep' —— se io gli potessi tenere alquanto io pur gli farei piangere, chè io gli direi parole le quali farebber piangere chiunque le intendesse. In short his relatives, perceiving that not even time conquered his grief, engaged him at last to marry; in order to occupy his attention by the cares of domestic life. The experiment succeeded. His wife seems to have been to him a faithful partner. His offspring by her were numerous; and she certainly cherished them with exemplary affection. As to her having been a Xantippe, chasing all domestic peace from Dante's

household, nothing of the kind is fairly to be drawn either from Boccaccio or any ancient commentator. The tales to her disparagement seem to be mere, groundless, modern reveries; little authentic is known about her, but that little is, we shall find, to her credit. At present I shall only remark, that this matrimonial tie alleviated his sorrow; and hallowed, not removed, his memory of Beatrice. His love for her, having indeed been pure and virtuous, he had always considered it as holy and often described it as an incentive to goodness. So her name became henceforward more than ever dedicated to his various muses; and, whether in prose or poetry, almost every thing he afterwards wrote represents her as the source of all his best knowledge and the object of all his most fervent hopes. But strangely organized must that head be, which can consider her as no more than a mystical creation of the writer himself, after having attended to the narrative of her birth, life and death thus minuted in a diary more circumstantial than almost any other penned by a lover, either before or since. Many however have called in doubt her real existence; but I persuade myself they had not carefully perused the Vita Nuova. Otherwise I should feel myself in a situation, which never is pleasant, that of being at variance with another about what appears to me a self-evident proposition. And how can I think it to be less? Can those amatory details be applied to a mere

fantastic image, without the grossest perversion? What biography of love is to be credited, if this is not? I know of no relation of the kind that carries with it so many internal marks of truth. Were the name of Beatrice unrecorded any where else, her existence and her story are sufficiently made known in this work. This alone, without other reference, (although, if such be sought, there is plenty in Boccaccio and the ancient commentators) is enough to make me consider further argument as quite superfluous. There are points which it is worse than useless to argue; if one believes it is midnight and another that it is noon-day, why discuss their difference? Neither can be convinced, one must have lost his eyesight or his reason or both. I were as decidedly at issue with a person, who could read the Vita nuova and still doubt as to Beatrice's mortality. That book had ended thus: 'I had a vision of my glorious lady, such as she appeared before she left us, — prima che si partìo da noi — and she seemed clad in the same members of the same sanguine complexion and the same tender age, as when I saw her for the first time — giovane in simile età a quella in che prima la vidi; but, shortly after, she favoured me with a still more marvellous visitation, and I saw things that made me resolve to write no more of the dear saint, until I should be able to do so in a manner less unworthy of her; and she looking down upon me knows, that I verily study for that purpose

without intermission as closely as I can — e divenire a ciò io studio quant' io posso: so that, if it but pleaseth the Almighty to spare me my life for some years longer, I hope to say that of her which was never yet said of any female' — spero di dire di lêi quello, che mai non fu detto d'alcuna.

Such is the promise so gloriously redeemed in the present poem; which, even at that early period, was probably begun, viz. in 1291; for this is about the date of the publication of the Vita Nuova: earlier it could not have been finished, since it contains verses written on the anniversary of Beatrice's death; nor much later, without doing too much violence to Boccaccio's testimony, who affirms Dante terminated it towards his twenty-sixth year — quasi nel suo ventesimo sesto anno (1). At least, this peremptory annunciation of a great work prevents its being absurd to conjecture that it was already partly in existence, if not upon paper, at any rate in its author's mind. That his affections were dedicated to a real lady, that that lady was deceased, and that it was his long-cherished wish to immortalize her name, are then facts above controversy: and it is also a fact, easily collected from a little attention to his life and writings, that it was his paramount ambition to render all his productions useful to mankind in general. How were such various objects to be re-

(1) Bocc. Vita di Dante. p. 254.

conciled? I know not if there was another mode than that which he selected and which, as he rightly says, had never been adopted by any one before. It was in truth one of his noblest inventions, this of making his lady a personification of that knowledge, which, if not quite illimitable, is at least without other superior than the uncreated fountain whence it emanates. Former poets had treated of wars and the founding of empires: had he sung simply of a girl, could all his genius have exalted his compositions to a level with theirs? In taking so circumscribed a flight, would he not have been unjust to his own powers, and conferred less honor even upon her memory? Could he then have benefited society at large, by showering out his treasures of science? Or have called, as we shall find him do, upon the God of verse to crown him with the laurel, affirming with honest pride that the subject-matter of his song rendered him worthy of it (1)? He had at one time intended to write a comment on his poem; in which case he would himself have explained all this: but pecuniary difficulties, and at last death, prevented him. He had in fact scarcely finished the text when he expired. But, in default of his own comment on the Divine Comedy, we have what he probably intend-

(1) Venir vedrámi al tuo diletto legno,
E coronarmi allor di quelle foglie,
Che la matera e tu mi farai degno.
Parad. 1.

ed as its model — his comments on his Odes or Canzoni; and these (under the title of Convito or Banquet) leave nothing to be desired, as far at least as Beatrice is concerned. They tell us that, whatever she may signify literally, that which most interests the reader is to be aware of her allegorical sense, and know that Beatrice, though she is the same lady whom he had celebrated and whose death he had wept in the Vita nuova, is to be received as the personification of the divinest philosophy: and that in fine his audience should for the future invariably deem her such. 'The selfsame, admirable Beatrice' (he writes) 'of whom I discoursed in the Vita nuova, in that fervid effusion of my boyhood, which were no longer in character with these my mature years, yet not one syllable of which I would be understood as retracting, but rather as confirming, in what I am about to say at present; for as the age of man varies, so should his language and conduct vary; there are manners which sit well and handsomely on youth, and yet would be awkward and even highly blameable in an elderly person; I composed the Vita nuova with the passionate heat of one not yet arrived at manhood, and I begin these comments in the sober tone that becometh me now that that season of life is quite over — Se nella presente opera vo' più virilmente parlare che nella Vita nuova, non intendo però a quella in parte alcuna derogare, ma maggiormente gio-

vare; e se quella è fervida e passionata, e questa temprata e virile,' così conviene essere; io in quella dinanzi all'entrata di mia gioventute parlai; e in questa di poi quella già trapassata; altro si conviene e dire e operare a una etade, e altro a un'altra; e certi costumi sono idonei e laudabili a una etade, che sono sconci e biasimevoli ad'altra: the same glorious Beatrice in whose praise I then expatiated, she whose corporeal charms are no more, but whose spirit remains in secure possession of the fortress of my mind, — la rocca della mia mente — the Saint that passed away indeed, but that lives in heaven with the angels and on earth in union with my soul, is not henceforth to be considered simply as a female, but as a creature personifying the loftiest portion of philosophy, the eldest daughter of Jehovah, the universal queen, the spotless dove of Solomon, the wisdom most happy and supreme, which at last resigned me to the irreparable loss of her who was my first love. No other than that celestial study could ever have assuaged my anguish, inconsolable as I was when she became lost to me who was my soul's first delight — quando per me fu perduto quel primo diletto della mia anima. It was the constant perusal of Boëtius and Cicero that at length induced me to wean my affections from every earthly care and raise them to an exclusive reliance on that noblest philosophy, which I henceforth presented to my imagination in the form of

my own gentlest lady, now become an inmate of Paradise'—e immaginava lei fatta come una donna gentile, quella gentil donna di cui feci menzione nella Vita nuova (1). Can any more satisfactory illustration be required? What is there to prevent our considering Beatrice in this two fold light? Do we not consider a human being as two fold viz. as body and as soul? This is quite natural; it is to figure them asunder that is abstruse and perplexing. Her form we are, as he tells us, to represent as that of his lovely mistress. We have seen she was a Florentine lady: to which I may add, that her father, Folcho Portinari, was celebrated for many princely acts of charity, but, above all, for having been the founder (2) of the magnificent hospital S. Maria Nuova, an establishment that still confers benefit on his native place. Boccaccio affirms that he was one of the most upright, most anciently descended, and every way most illustrious citizens of the Republic (3); and the line of Folcho is ranked by Mini among the oldest and noblest of Italy, having given, as he avers, 'a high admiral to the order of S. Iohn, since called of Rhodes, and now of Malta' (4). What insurmountable impediment there was to her union with our poet I cannot learn. It does not seem to have been

(1) Convito. pp. 55.—77.—78.—95.—102.
(2) Toscana Illustrata. vol. 1.
(3) Comento. vol. 1. p. 112.
(4) Difesa. p. 240.

in her heart: for it is easily gathered, both that they never mutually revealed their passion, and that Dante flattered himself she secretly loved him; and indeed he makes her avow as much on their meeting in Purgatory, as we shall see. Neither was it from any disparity of rank; for his also was very distinguished, as shall be shown; so that when he married, it was into the family at that time confessedly the first in Florence both as to present authority and hereditary station, that of Donati. But there were so many domestic and political feuds during that tempestuous era, that there must have been almost innumerable bars to matrimonial alliances. She married a Florentine gentleman a cavaliere M. Simone de'Bardi, according to Boccaccio, as well as to the M. S. I have already quoted. These Bardi were people of highest consequence: one was elected head Prior on the first establishment of Priors in 1282, others of their family were successively promoted to the same dignity, indeed their name appears on the roll of the Priorists above ten several times during a space of less than nine years (1); Mini says, that they were still in his time Lords of Vernia, as they had been for centuries (2); and I have myself the honor of being personally acquainted with one of them, who, even at this day, is a potent Count in Tuscany, and besides bears the lofty title of Perpetual Vicar of the

(1) Priorista Fiorentino. pp. 8.—25
(2) Difesa. p. 241.

empire — a title once courted by our own Edward III. when he undertook his expedition against France (1). We know from the Vita nuova that Beatrice had a brother (2), that Dante was his intimate associate and indeed called him his second friend, (Guido Cavalcanti, of whom we already spoke, being invariably named his first) that they wept together for her loss, and that the poet composed verses for them both on that melancholy occasion, some expressive of his own and some of fraternal love and sorrow. But, if he indulged his affections in his works by arraying her there in the pristine, female shape which he had admired on earth, he consulted a loftier scope by considering her spiritual part as the perfection of celestial wisdom, or in his own words supreme Philosophy; of which the loftiest speculations without doubt are those that treat of the soul and its creator. Hence Beatrice is represented by commentators as theology, (although indeed theology be not an expression much employed by Dante) and, if it be taken in its original acceptation of the study of God, they are right; and it may well be used as the synonyme of universal, all-comprehending knowledge, or what Dante terms supreme philosophy: because if it were possible to rise in this life to a just conception of the Almighty, it is likely we should have an intuitive acquaintance with all his works;

(1) Hume. Hist. Vol. 3. p. 215.
(2) p. 39.

and, vice versa, there is perhaps no better way to elevate our minds towards that celestial source than gradually by an industrious and modest investigation of the numberless natural wonders that do flow thence. But the commentators are wrong, if they give theology the degraded signification of the schools, logical divinity, the wordy war of doctors, who disclaim connection with any other art or science: for we shall find Beatrice discussing almost all arts and sciences, and a vast variety of matter both ethical and physical in this poem as well as in the Convito. There she is emphatically styled supreme philosophy — la somma filosofia; a title comprehending the entire range of sciences, of which theology, in the scholastic sense, is only one; but, in another, more extensive and perhaps more accurate sense, theology comprises them all, and is therefore synonymous with Dante's supreme philosophy. This truth is repeated by Peter Alighieri in his comment on the present passage, who, however obscure and mystical he is too often, expresses himself here intelligibly and reasonably enough — philosophiæ pars altior est, quæ idem est quod theologia .... et hæc est Beatrix (1). And it is in this extensive acceptation that even Landino here receives theology; 'for', he says, 'each particular science has its particular merits, but theology embraces them all' — l'ab-

(1) Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. XL. Cod. 38.

braccia tutte (1). Considering the two terms as synonymes, Beatrice may very well be called a personification of theology, and indeed in Italian ought to continue to be so; because it is a foolish affectation of singularity to change long-received names, where the things they represent are not changed: but in English, where no established custom interferes, it is widely different, and I think myself at liberty to take either of those equivalent expressions, and prefer supreme philosophy for two reasons —— because it is the one used by Dante himself in the Convito, that succedaneum for a comment on the Divine Comedy, in order to let us know what allegorical acceptation we should put, both in those his Canzoni and in this his great poem, on the sainted heroine of his Vita nuova; and because it seems to convey, with smaller risk of ambiguity, the intent of the Author, which evidently was to make his deceased Beatrice personify on every occasion the sum of all virtue and learning, and not any individual art or science, spiritual or material. Under whatever name she pass, of theology or of supreme philosophy, this is manifest, that he ever meant her as a personification, not of any exclusive branch of erudition, but of the universality of wisdom, the complex of every intellectual attainment human and divine. M. Ginguené then has a right to affirm, that no other fe-

(1) Comento. p. 14.

male ever had so flattering a hommage paid unto her. But when he says she personifies 'the science then regarded as the first' — alors regardée comme la première (1) — there is no absolving him entirely; because if he means theology in the restricted sense of scholars, he errs, by giving Beatrice a signification different from that intended, as I have shown, by Dante; and if he correctly understands it, as synonymous with supreme philosophy, his words imply a less trivial error, by describing as only *then* regarded as the first a science that must always be regarded as such, since it includes every other. Astronomers, metaphysicians, lawyers etc. may cultivate separate branches of erudition, but in supreme philosophy (by whatever name known) they all meet; for, in the words of Dante, 'this science is the truth to which every other truth tends, other sciences are but as handmaids, queens and concubines to this immaculate Solomean dove, this soul-reposing haven, where all doubts and sophistical arguments vanish, and our studies are ennobled by the sublime certainty of the subject to which they are directed and which is indeed the perfection of all that is true and certain, God himself (2):' so Beatrice not only embraces every minor truth of human science, but, even after that, has her principal, supernatural flight still to attempt, for which the rest indeed

(1) Hist. Litt. d'Italie. vol. 2. p. 33.
(2) Convito. p. 102.

were only preparations. She at last leaves the world behind, and entices us to follow from a dissection of material phenomena to what is more congenial with our nobler immaterial essence, an enquiry into our own internal properties, our hopes and duties here and our destinies hereafter; and, too justly ambitious to be content with secondary causes, she leads us up to a consideration of the great First Cause himself —— to an unshackling of the spirit, an intellectual ecstacy, which, while it betters even our earthly lot by at least a temporary abstraction from bodily infirmities, teaches us to aspire to unfading virtue and peace, consoles us in our present afflictions and renders us less unworthy of future happiness, by convincing us that all does not end with this frail vesture of clay, for, in Dante's own phrase,

Are we not worms shall yet be riven
And breed the glorious butterfly
Whose wings were made to soar to heaven (1)?

—— a holy freedom of thought irresistibly attractive to the finer particles within the bosoms of men, without reference to any particular creeds or countries; and which occupied the Pagan as fully as the Christian sages, Confucius and Socrates, as well as Fenelon and Hooker. Such are the sublime sentiments now linked for ever and ever with the name and form of a young Tuscan girl,

(1) Purg. Canto x.

who, but for the sacred bard, would have peeped and been cut away as unnoticed, as a daisy amid the countless flowers of a luxurious meadow. Yet her praises have been already sung for above five hundred years, and will continue to be so. If from the conflagration of universal literature the scholars of Italy were to save but one single relick, it would be this book, the Divine Comedy: it is then no exageration to foretell, that, as long as three or four volumes exist upon earth, this will.

Much confusion has arisen from not representing Beatrice thus in her double capacity; the origin of all which seems, in great part, to be attributable to the commentators having neglected Dante's prose writings, or at least given them only a superficial perusal. Even the indefatigable and voluminous Landino is not to be exempted from such a censure. One elegant Critic (1) cries out that Beatrice is infinitely more lovely in her literal sense, as if literal were opposed to allegorical, instead of being united with it; and as if they were inconsistent with each other, instead of having (as I have before said) as natural an alliance in our imagination, as that between mind and body in a mortal creature. He would in fact deprive her of the brighter moiety of her creation; it were like substituting, for a form in full life and beauty, the skeleton of one who had been beautiful half a

(1) M. Merian. Mem. de l' Acad. de Berlin. 1784.

dozen centuries ago. But we have seen how contrary this is to the author's intent; and we shall hereafter find many passages that were inexplicable on such a barren, unspiritual hypothesis. Others fall into the opposite error, and represent her as nothing but an allegorical image. This too we shall find quite inconsistent with many occurrences in this poem, as well as it is with the prose extracts already quoted: to which I may add, it is also implicitly overturned by the introductory verses to, what was perhaps the latest produce of his pen, his translation of the Creed; where he blames himself for having dedicated too much of his time to the celebration of a fellow creature, and declares that the remainder of his powers shall be entirely and exclusively given up to Christianity(1). He appears to have been anxious to prevent both the above misunderstandings; and so, not only prepared against them both what has been cited from the Convito, but sedulously composed various passages of this poem with a view to preclude the possibility of considering its heroine either as entirely allegorical, or entirely literal; for

(1) Io scrissi già d'amor più volte rime
Quanto più seppi dolci, belle, e vaghe;
E in pulirle adoprai tutte mie lime.
. . . . . .
Da questo falso amor omai la mano
A scriver più di lui io vo' ritrarre,
E ragionar di Dio, ec.
I sette Salmi di D. A. p. 137.

some of them can receive no reasonable interpretation without taking her in the former, nor others without taking her in the latter sense. She must then be inseparably endowed with each: her shape and spiritual essence must not be disjoined. These are both beautiful and mutually beautify each other: the critics, who would strip her of her immaterial attributes, show as bad taste, as those who would deny her affecting connection with the world, and describe her as nothing more than the mystic doctoress of the schools. Here below, she had been two fold; a form that, as her lover says, resembled that of a Goddess, and a mind replete with benevolence: why not partake of the same double nature above? Hence what he had named upon earth her 'sweet accents' — dolcissimo parlare — becomes in heaven an 'Angel-utterance' — Angelica favella; her eyes once 'bright and full of love' now 'dim the solar flame'; and her countenance, though still retaining a resemblance to her mortal features, is clothed in Paradise with radiance too dazzling to be long dwelt upon: her mental faculties are also proportionably exalted; till, blest with the prerogative of reading eternal truth, she becomes its delegated expounder to mankind. A curious obliquity induced even the representing of the Beatrices of Dante's three works as three distinct personages; of whom she of the Vita nuova was held to be possibly a real lady, she of the Convito philosophy, and she of this

poem theology: but how preposterous such suppositions are, is, I flatter myself, made already quite apparent. I have quoted his own assertion that the Beatrice of his Convito, she who still was in possession of the 'fortress of his mind', was the self-same Beatrice of whom he had spoken in his Vita nuova — quella donna gentile di cui feci menzione nella Vita nuova: one half then of the strange hypothesis is contradicted by Dante himself; and, if I cannot produce his own words to contradict the other half just as flatly, it is because he had no opportunity of speaking them, having never commented the Divine Comedy. But it follows clearly from analogy, that, if in two of his compositions is meant one and the same lady, she also is in the third. Nothing could overturn this argument but evidence either literally conveyed by some passage in the works of Dante, or strictly implied by it. This is so far from being the case, that all his expressions are not only consistent with the analogy but in general corroborate it. Beatrice therefore, in each composition of our poet, means, in a literal sense, the same object of his young love, Beatrice Portinari, and, in an allegorical sense, the same 'eldest daughter of Jehovah' (whether denominated theology, or supreme philosophy) whom he had represented to himself in the shape of his Beatrice — e imaginava lei fatta come quella donna gentile.

Francesco da Buti pretends she was a daughter

of an Emperor of Constantinople, adding with ludicrous presumption, that this discovery was entirely his own, not arising from any thing to that effect in the text, but from his recollecting that the said Potentate had a child of the said appellation—*perchè nel testo non n'è parola* (1). But really the whims and perplexities of the commentators are too tantalizing to unravel them all. Chronology, the polar star of true criticism, is so far from serving as their guide that they appear to scorn attending to it; and the consequence is, that the only way to get clear of a labyrinth is to begin by expunging every one of their dates and setting out afresh with Dante's various works on one hand, and on the other the chronicles and legal documents of that time, along with a few of the very oldest comments or rather fragments of comments, which I noticed heretofore (2). For instance even the late Pelli, correct as he is esteemed by Ginguené who follows him without reserve, produces in a short passage such an assortment of palpable inconsistencies, as might pass for gross errors of the press, if they did not pervade both the text and the note attached to it, and if this note were not made for the purpose of taxing Boccaccio with negligence. 'Beatrice died in her twenty-sixth year on the ninth of June 1290 (3)', is the text. This is the

(1) Prose antiche. Pref. XIV.
(2) Comment. Hell. Canto 1. p. 25.
(3) .... *nel* 26 *anno dell'età sua.* Mem. per la vita di Dante p. 65.

note appended to it: 'Boccaccio writes that Beatrice when she died was in her twenty-fourth year; but that is false —— ma ciò è falso; for, considering that Dante fell in love with her towards the close of his ninth year, it follows that it was about April 1274, he being born in May 1265; and the same Dante telling us that Beatrice had entered her ninth year a little before then, who does not clearly see that she must have been born in the said month of April 1265, and that in June 1290 she must have fully completed twenty-six years of age (1)?' But, far from seeing clearly, I ask who can understand any thing of all this? In the text, she died in her twenty-sixth year; in the note, after having fully completed twenty-six years of age, ergo when she was in her twenty-seventh year. First, she is nearly a year younger than Dante —— entering her ninth when he was closing his ninth year; secondly, as a month older than him —— being born in April and he in May of the self-same year 1265; thirdly, as a year older than him —— having fully completed twenty-six years when he was only entering them. The same identical page therefore represents him, and with the same tone of decision, as her senior by a year, as her junior by a month, and as her junior by a whole twelvemonth. Again, she is said to have entered her ninth year a little before April

(1) .... *aveva 26 anni compiti*. Mem. per la vita di Dante. p. 65.

1274, when she would, on the contrary, have been on the point of closing it, were the other assertion not incorrect of her having been born in May 1265. But let that pass: and turn to the conclusion which undertakes to rectify Boccaccio — this latter saying that when Beatrice died in June 1290 she was in her twenty-fourth year, and Pelli that she was twenty-six years old. Dante was truly born in May 1265; so that Beatrice who was about a year younger (in Dante's words she was entering her ninth when he was closing his ninth year) must have been born in or about May the first 1266; but probably on the first itself, from the circumstance of the ball which, I before remarked (1), her father gave on that day, and which being a usual birth-day commemoration in distinguished families, was more likely to be given on the anniversary of her birth than on any other day within the week or fortnight, and within the week or fortnight, either immediately before or after the first of May, she must have been born, according to that phrase of Dante's. Then from May 1266 to May 1267 she was still in her first year; therefore during the first four months of 1290 she was still in her twenty-fourth. She entered her twenty-fifth however in or about May the first, so that on the ninth of the following month she certainly had outlived her twenty-fourth by

(1) p. 95.

some days or weeks. Boccaccio then by saying she died in her twenty-fourth is not mathematically precise, but makes her a week or two younger than the truth; but the impugner, who accuses him of speaking false, makes her a couple of years too old by asserting she had then completed twenty-six years of age. The slightest correction of the press, and Boccaccio's date is geometrically exact: but, to correct the other's laboured incongruities the entire passage must be expunged. Yet I do not enter into these details, either to blame Pelli, or from any weight that I attach to the nice ascertainment of the dying lady's age; but I select his book to exemplify the inaccuracy, not to say slovenliness, of writers on Dante as to dates, exactly because I think Pelli a very satisfactory biographer in several other respects, and because he has obtained the reputation of being very accurate; and I trouble my readers with this digression, in order to merit their confidence for the future. For, if I show that such a man as Pelli who professedly undertakes to give a long, minute, chronological memoir on the life of Dante, is quite inexact on the very point on which he had chosen to display himself at issue with Boccaccio, I may reasonably hope, that on various future occasions I shall have credit for prefering Boccaccio to many modern critics and commentators of less reputation than Pelli, and for even frequently dissenting from these latter, without being always under the

necessity of digressing much to justify that preference, or that dissent. That my preceding calculation as to the age of Beatrice is correct will be easily verified by a moment's reflection, or indeed even without it, upon glancing over the biographical table which I shall here set down, not only to answer the present purpose, but also because it may be sometimes a convenient reference hereafter.

Dante born in May 1265 and Beatrice about May 1266, they (from May to May) were in

he his first year	1265 —	6,
he his second	1266 —	7, she her first,
he his fifth	1269 —	70, she her fourth,
he his sixth	1270 —	1, she her fifth,
he his eighth	1272 —	3, she her seventh,
he his ninth	1273 —	4, she her eighth,
he his tenth	1274 —	5, she her ninth,
he his thirteenth	1277 —	8, she her twelfth,
he his sixteenth	1280 —	1, she her fifteenth,
he his nineteenth	1283 —	4, she her eighteenth,
he his twenty-fourth	1288 —	9, she her twenty-third,
he his twenty-fifth	1289 —	90, she her twenty-fourth,
he his twenty-sixth	1290 —	1, she her twenty-fifth,
he his thirtieth	1294 —	5,
he his thirty-fourth	1298 —	9,
he his thirty-fifth	1299 —	300,
he his thirty-sixth	1300 —	1,
he his fortieth	1304 —	5,
he his forty-fourth	1308 —	9,

he his forty-fifth 1309 — 10,
he his fiftieth 1314 — 5,
he his fifty-sixth 1320 — 1,
he his fifty-seventh 1321 — 2.

But she died when barely entered into her twenty-fifth year —— June the ninth, 1290; and he died in the fourth month of his fifty-seventh —— September the fourteenth, 1321.

I am aware of no further details to be procured with regard to the lady of whom we are treating; many could scarcely be expected about one who died young, and who during her life performed no mighty part on the theatre of the world. Of the generality of females in her situation the entire history is comprised in this, that they were born, solaced or fretted their housholds for a while, and died. To her noble birth and noble marriage she could add, that she inspired the greatest man of her age with the purest love of which our heavenly souls are susceptible while here on earth, such love as an angel would delight to awake; that the decease of her mortal frame was mourned universally by her fellow citizens, and her spirit greeted with an unrivalled compliment by being made to personify God-like wisdom; that her name is identified with one of those few productions destined to survive such long lapses of time, that passing generations sooth their own feelings by attributing its superiority to some superhuman

power, and therefore lavish on it the epithets of divine and immortal, although they are not ignorant that these cannot be strictly merited by anything terrestrial; and, in fine, that she was canonized, if not by a general Council of her Church, at least by one of its most learned theological doctors.

I am conscious of being slow, perhaps tiresome: but I have at present lingered with the less scruple, both on account of my desire to give a complete idea of the heroine from her first appearance, and because we shall not see her again for more than half the poem. How can I close better a note spun out to almost an essay than by a hope that the tender, pious poet had his prayer realized; and that, on departure from this state of existence, his soul was permitted to ascend and rejoin its lady, the 'sacred Beatrice living in the glorious contemplation of the Being who is blessed throughout eternity? (1).'

M. —— LXXVI.

I have said Beatrice is to be received as the personification of supreme Philosophy; and it is in that character that Virgil styles her 'queen of the highest virtue.' The whole address much resembles that of Boetius on a similar occasion ——O omnium magistra virtutum! supero cardine delapsa venisti? Nihilne te ipsa loci facies movet? (2).

(1) Vita Nuova. Firenze 1723.
(2) De Consol. l. 1. cap. 3—4.

N. ——LXXVIII.

It appears to have been the author's fixed intent to include in these two prefatory Canti some reference to each department of the sciences that are to be more familiarly introduced on various occasions. Thus he here prepares his reader by an indication of his astronomical system, which was the one then received by all learned men, who by no treatises of theirs could have rendered its knowledge half so popular, as this widely diffused poem did; wherein there are scattered so many references to that branch of erudition, that the audience (if they had taken the pains to become masters of the two first Canticles) must have attained an entire acquaintance with it, even long previous to their arrival at its recapitulated and more detailed exemplification in the third Canticle, or Paradise. A few words are enough at present: the nine heavens of Ptolemy are followed with the addition of a tenth, a moveless infinite one beyond the others, and inwrapping them and all things, according to the Christian belief. They therefore are in this order: —— that moveless Empyrean, within which rolls the prime mover, within it the orbit of the fixed stars, then, one within the other, the seven planets, of which the Moon is the inmost and consequently describes the narrowest circle. These are celestial: but within or, in other words, beneath the moon lie all terrene

things, the atmospheres of fire and air, and, like the nucleus of the universe, this our orb of earth itself; within whose bowels, (that is near whose centre, which is the centre of creation) are placed (in conformity with the classics) the infernal regions. The entire creation may thus be considered as divided into earthly and unearthly: the former being spurned by man's soul if guided by true wisdom; and the latter having for its lowest, or, in the terms of the text, its narrowest orbit or sky that of the moon; below which there is therefore nothing, but what our immortal part should learn to view with a feeling of its own superiority: for, in the words of Cicero,—infra lunam nihil est nisi mortale et caducum, præter animos generi hominum munere Deorum datos (1). Indeed it is highly probable that this sentence of the Roman orator was present to Dante's recollection when he composed the passage we are considering. He was certainly familiar with a vast number of books, as all his writings show: but those which he turned over night and day were Virgil, Cicero, and Boetius. These were so constantly his companions, that whenever any one of his phrases resemble one of theirs, we may affirm, without difficulty, it was suggested by it; nor do I consider that as detracting from his merit, not even from his chief merit as a poet, invention. How Virgilian is this poem,

(1) Somnum Scip. p. 6.

we shall have continual occasions for observing; and in his Convito he tells us, that the Philosophical Consolation of Boetius and Cicero's treatise on friendship were for ever in his hands, and much imitated by him while composing the greater part of that volume from which I extracted so amply in the preceding article L, that dream of his love, the Vita Nuova —— quasi sognando come nella Vita Nuova si può vedere (1).

O. —— XCIII.

I have said (2) that this Limbo is that called by Catholics, 'of-the-holy-fathers'; that it resembles the Virgilian Elysium, and that it forms part of Hell. But let us here establish the meaning of the word Hell, or Inferno, Infernus. It is vulgarly employed as denoting exclusively a region of torment: but such is not the acceptation given it in the modern Romish Church; nor was it in the ancient one. The Platonic Virgil divided his hell into four distinct parts —— distinct from their very nature; not artificially, like the little better than imaginary ones pointed out by his expositors Servius and Ascensius (3). The first division contains the souls of children —— the second, those undergoing expiation in a variety of ways —— the third, those who merit enjoyment —— and the fourth,

(1) Convito. p. 95.
(2) p. 87.
(3) Com. ap. Aeneid. l. 6. v. 424.

such as, like Salmoneus or Ixion, are doomed to horrible tortures during eternity. This remains still the doctrine of Rome: on which head no testimony can be clearly than that of S. Thomas Aquinas, surnamed the Angelical doctor, whose opinion is received as undeniably orthodox by the Catholics of this day, as well as it was by those of Dante's age — Infernus est quadruplex, scilicet damnatorum, puerorum, purgandorum, et sanctorum patrum (1). 'Hell is fourfold; of the damned, of children, of souls under expiation, and of the holy fathers. In the first' (he continues) 'is never ending woe'—that is Tartarus: 'in the second is no actual pain, although it suffer privation of glory and grace' — a condition preferable to that allotted to children (infantum animæ flentes in limine primo) in the Aeneid: 'in the third sinners expiate their offences' — as they do in many parts of Virgil's hell: 'and in the fourth, there not only is no sensible punishment, but there are all the delights of grace and glory that can be attainable out of Paradise itself' — which conveys a perfect picture of the Campi Elysii of antiquity. Dante was a warm admirer of S. Thomas Aquinas, and indeed looked up to him as his master in theology: hence it was quite natural for him to adopt those four distinctions of Hell; and the more so, because they were, not only highly poetic in themselves,

(1) D. Tom. Aquini. Sen. 1. dist. XII quæs. etc.

but satisfied a still dearer propensity by permitting him to unite a rigid conformity to the tenets of his own church, with a respectful deference to that of his predecessors in elegant literature. It is then S. Thomas's hell (of which what is vulgarly called hell only makes a part) that is followed in this poem. According to this plan, this present Canticle, Hell, contains three hells, as we shall see — the hell-of-the-damned, the hell-of-children, and the hell-of-the-holy-fathers; which correspond to the first, sixth and ninth circles of Virgil's hell: and there is dedicated the entire of the second Canticle, or Purgatory, to a description of the hell-of-expiation, (infernus purgandorum) a region which resembles, in essentials, the other six circles which Virgil's hell is lent by scholiasts. The *fire* seen by Beatrice is then that of the neighbouring hell-of-the-damned, and not of Limbo.

P. — XCIV.

Whether this lady be intended as a personification of divine Charity, as is said, I cannot exactly aver, nor is it much to our purpose to inquire: that the explications of the commentators are deduced rather from their own fancies than from any thing in the text is apparent from their disagreeing with each other. Many contend for Clemency; Jacob Alighieri for the profound mind of the Deity — la profonda mente della Deità (1); his brother

(1) Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. XL. Cod. 10.

Peter for operating Grace — gratia operans (1); and the latest of them all (M. Biagioli) for 'the Soul, that is, the Reason'; in which discovery he is surely not much happier than his predecessors, notwithstanding the immense fatigue which, he declares, it cost him — l'immensa fatica che m'è costato il rinvenirla (2). That it is a holy, clement, sainted, female spirit who speaks is obvious. Dante might have meant her to personify some particular divine virtue; but it is out of my province to decide which. She is rendered sufficiently sublime by being put in Paradise. Without further search after her allegorical, I therefore descend to her literal meaning — on which no comment with which I am acquainted, either in writing or in print, has ever deigned to say a syllable, except the M. S. in the Riccardi library. 'She who is now noticed' (affirms the M. S.) 'was a lady of Lucca, of whom Dante became an admirer about ten years after Beatrice's decease and for whom he wrote the song, Io mi son pargoletta ec. (3). 'It seems necessary to remark that *pargoletta* is not a noun proper, but common, and means merely *a young little girl:* therefore is there nothing in the appellation to prevent her being considered as the individual once slightly named Gentucca in Canto XXIV. of Purgatory, and again alluded to by the

(1) Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. XL. Cod. 38.
(2) Com. Inf. p. 41. Ed. 1820.
(3) Bib. Ricc. Cod. 1016.

pretty diminutive pargoletta in Canto xxxi. of the same Canticle. In the date seems to lie some impediment. Certainly from Beatrice's death (1290) to the opening of this poem (1300) leaves ten years, or space enough to shelter both the poet and his commentator from anachronism. But the difficulty is, that in Purgatory we shall find Gentucca spoken of as on earth, and that here she is represented as already in Paradise. There is one way of reconciling these things, conjecturing that the author *here* ventures on her apotheosis before her death: as to his allusions to her *there*, they are quite transient. Nor were this anticipated spirituality any novelty in the fine arts, nor without instance in this very Canticle (1). It may be objected that in that instance, the poet apprizes us of the truth, but not so in the present one, and that I therefore hazard a perfectly gratuitous supposition; which were, I allow, very blamable if hazarded in opposition to authority; but not surely in this actual case, where it is employed to justify authority. For the writer of the M. S. I have quoted makes the unrestricted affirmation, that the allusion here is to a lady of Lucca whom Dante had celebraed with the song, I am *pargoletta;* and adds, that she was one of the only three ladies whom he ever professed to admire — the other two being his Beatrice and a maid of Prato

(1) Canto xxxiii.

vecchio. I may add that (pargoletta) 'a young little girl' is quite synonymous with the phrase used to designate Gentucca (che non porta ancor benda) 'who wears not yet the veil of a woman', that is, is still attired like a young girl. Thus she called Gentucca, and pargoletta, and here simply donna ('a fair') is no more than one and the same person — that beautiful Lucchese, that innocent, tender sylph-like maiden, whom, if these verses anticipate her salvation, that song also describes as a passing, ethereal guest, descended for a moment from her celestial abode. 'I am a young little girl, a lovely creature descending to show you a specimen of the beauties that dwell in my home. My home is Paradise, whither I shall again return. The man capable of remaining unenamoured in my presence shall never know what love is: for when nature obtained me from the Creator, and I was permitted to be during a season lent you, fair ladies, as your companion, no charm was denied to me. Into my eyes doth every star shower its light and influence: nor are my perfections of this world, but quite new and come down freshly from above. Such are the verses legible on the forehead of yonder, pretty angel (1).' There is also one of

(1) Io mi son pargoletta bella e nuova;
E son venuta per mostrarmi a vui
Delle bellezze e loco, dond' io fui.
Io fui del Cielo e tornerovvi ancora;
. . . . . .

his sonnets addressed to the same young beauty, which begins —— 'who shall ever gaze without trembling on the eyes of this lovely little girl (1)?' It ends by comparing her to a star and a pearl. It is observable that all this, though expressive of delight and admiration, is void of a trace of amatory passion: and is therefore the very reverse of his manner when mentioning Beatrice. She it was that was graven on his heart: the praises extorted from him by other females seem not so much inspired by attachment to the individual, as by an abstract sentiment, by a moral enthusiasm, (like that of Plato, M. Angelo, and a few others of affections less clay-clogged than our own) by a yearning after ideal loveliness 'considered apart from the object to which it is united', (as Condivi says of his great master)'a doating on beauty for itself, an adoration of that eternal fairness which presents us, under various shapes, with celestial emations: for he who gazed on a beauteous woman, or a

Ciascuna stella negli occhi mi piove
Della sua luce e della sua vertute;
Le mie bellezze sono al mondo nove,
Perocchè di lassù mi son venute.
. . . . . .
Queste parole si leggon nel viso
D' una Angioletta, ec.
Rime. Ballata II.

(1) Chi guarderà giammai senza paura
Negli occhi d'esta bella pargoletta?
Che ec.
Id. Sonetto IV.

handsome man with rapture, was also enraptured at beholding any fair object whatever, —— a fine horse or dog, a luxuriant tree or field, the calm ocean, or a glorious evening or sun-rise (1).'

Q. —— XCVII.

Lucia receives divers expositions as well as the preceding lady. Boccaccio denominates one a personification of Prayer and the other of Mercy; Peter Alighieri says Lucia represents Mathematics; Jacob, the Grace of God; Biagioli, Truth; but the most general opinion is in favour of Illuminating Grace —— an interpretation that is partly founded on the derivation of the word Lucia from lux, light (2). It follows that the precise allegorical sense intended by Dante is not discoverable from the text: so that here, as in the former Article, he may or may not have personified some individual virtue. Here again then I stoop to the literal sense, and find it in the Riccardi M. S. comment, but in no other. According to it, this mildly-beaming saint was in her earthly career a real lady —— the third and last of whom Dante ever seemed to be enamoured. Besides the present passage, he wrote other verses in her praise, which are to be found among his minor poems or *Rime;* but in none of those verses is she addressed by name, so that her true Christian

(1) Vita di M. A Buonarroti.

(2) Lucià, ita dicta propter lucem de qua tractat.
Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. XL. Cod. 38,

name might very well have been Lucia; and the reason for calling her so here, might be simply this, and none of the fantastic etymologies of the commentators. 'She was a native of Prato-vecchio' (continues the M. S.)' and he composed for her, among other songs, that which begins

O love, since then it must be so
And since the world must hear my woe
And all my weakness, etc.

She was the last of whom he ever sung; and he made her acquaintance some time after his exile (1).' But this song, (which is now printed as the ninth of his Canzoni) still more than the composition cited in the preceding Article, exhibits a complete dearth of passion; although it be not without the ideal luxuriance often discernible in the Platonic musings of Petrarch, but which surely discloses rather the brilliancy of the imagination than the weakness of the heart. It is only in the closing strophes that there is any thing touching; and then is revealed, not the love of the lady of whom he is writing, but of his country coupled with an observation on the neighbouring stream the Arno, which tacitly recalls her who had been born on its banks,

(1) L'altra e l'ultima fu una giovane di Prato-vecchio poich'egli fu cacciato da Firenze per cui fece quella Canzona morale

Amor, dacchè convien pur ch'io mi doglia,
Perchè la gente m'oda,
E mostri me ec.

Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016.

his adored Beatrice, to whom his heart was not less constant because she had become a shade —— L'amor, ch' io porto pure alla sua ombra (1). 'O love', he says, 'it is here then thou attackest me —— here amid these Alpine regions' (the Appennines) 'and in this valley, through which descends that stream, beside whose waters it is fated thou should'st always have full power over me!..... Now go thou forth, my little mountain-song, and perhaps thou mayest see my native place, my Florence, whose gates, barred against me, make a cruel return to my fond and loyal affection (2)'.

Here again we have an apparent difficulty in the Chronology; because this M. S. which says that Dante did not know Lucia until after his exile, asserts in another place (as we shall see, Boccaccio also does) that these Canti were composed long before his exile. But what should be deduced thence, except that the present passage was in some way or other modified, or lent an additional signification by the author at some subsequent period? This is readily understood; and it probably seemed an obvious observation to the ancient

(1) Rime. p. 217. Sestina.
(2) . . . . Amore in mezzo l'Alpi,
Nella valle del fiume
Lungo il qual sempre sopra me sei forte!
. . . . . .
Montanina mia canzon, tu vai,
Forse vedrai Fiorenza la mia terra:
ec. Id. p. 183. Canzone. IX.

commentator (who, I repeat, was apparently Dante's contemporary) or he would have explained the seeming incongruity. It was so easy to do, that his not doing it implies he thought it superfluous. But, instead of thus naturally interpreting his silence, it may be represented as overturning his authority by some, who appear to think, that a writer of the best reputation merits no confidence unless he anticipates each objection: which is surely the very reverse of what should be. For when any loophole is discoverable to reconcile such a person's assertions with each other, an ingenuous reader ought at once to catch at it; rather than question the veracity of one, who, from his situation, had better opportunities of information than others; and no visible inducement to invent falsehoods, and advance them as simple matters of fact. The precise dates of a man's amours, and still more of those of a Platonic lover like Dante, may be forgot easily; even supposing them once known, which is problematical: and the marvel is, that it is possible to come as near their verification as we do. It were indeed a waste of patience to attempt it, did it not afford assistance towards estimating his character. In this light it is interesting: for it proves the purity of his connexion with all three ladies. It is an error then to believe that he meant, that the disdainful expressions of Beatrice in Purgatory (1) should be considered as direct-

(1) Canto xxxi.

ed against either of the other two; and indeed their touching concert for his advantage in this present Canto ought to have prevented such mis-conjectures. Beatrice had left the earth 'about ten years' before he became acquainted with Gentucca; and it was long afterwards that he knew Lucia, when Gentucca probably was dead; for he had known the one (whether in Florence, or her native town, Lucca) before his exile, and the other during it. They were not then contemporaries in this world; and in heaven (whether considered as blessed spirits simply, or as personifications of different exalted virtues) could not be made to feel or cause any but benign sentiments. But now it suffices to remark, that, even had they been contemporaneous and still here below subjected to earthly feelings, they would not have been rivals; for Dante's heart belonged exclusively to Beatrice, however his lighter sentiments of admiration might be occasionally directed; and, that in heaven itself they are conscious of its being still her undivided property, is evident from their application to procure him succour from her — as from the person whom he had ever adored, and who therefore was bound in gratitude to intend his salvation. Less again (descending from romance to the dull survey of mortal existence) could his devotion to any of them be a slur on his connubial loyalty. Until after Beatrice's loss he did not marry, as we have seen; and to the wife he then espoused how sin-

cerely he became attached seems proved by the many children he had by her in the course of ten years; of whom six certainly, and perhaps seven, grew up to man's estate. The imperious cruelty of his fate separated him from her for ever on his exile; but that forced separation is unfairly adduced as a proof of their domestic unhappiness (1). Boccaccio is improperly represented as blaming her; but he does no such thing, his words being aimed against matrimony in itself, because of its peculiar unfitness for the followers of polite literature, and not against her in particular. She, on the contrary, seems to have performed all the duties of a faithful partner; remaining in Florence to save some of their fortune for their common children, and acting in a character still more interesting to the world, in that of careful preserver of her husband's writings, as we shall have occasion to unfold. Of those who, like Dante, passed their lives in public, and consequently afforded more matter for correct biography than literary men in general, there are few who have been persecuted with so many fables — not invented in his own age, but by the ingenuity of times comparatively recent. Amongst these fables is to be enumerated that of his having been married thrice; for which I do not discover a shadow of authority. I presume it originated in the ladies we have noticed, who

(1) Manetti . ec. ec.

were mistaken for three wives. Another person tells us (I imagine, by way of joke) that one of Dante's mistresses had a wen, which we may credit, or not: for there surely is no testimony either to prove, or disprove it. It is certain he had but one wife, and she appears to have survived him: her name was Gemma de' Donati, and the names of their children were — Peter, Jacob, Gabriel, Aligero, Eliseo, and Beatrice. This last, his only daughter, was called after his early flame: it is dubious whether he had not a sixth son, Francis (1).

R. — CV.

The same Horatian *vulgar* — profanum vulgus — is found in the Convito: 'I am not, it is true, entitled to a seat at the banquet of wisdom; but I have at least retired from the *vulgar*, and am busy in gathering the scraps that fall from that divine table (2).'

S. — CVII.

This triplet is entirely Scriptural. The ever-flowing flood that never finds an ocean to arrest it, and which is evidently another symbol for that called a forest, vale, or wilderness in Canto the first (the ills besetting a politician), is only the torrent of iniquity so often introduced in the Bible: as

(1) Vita — Leon. Arret. — Bocc. — Landino, ec. Both Gabriel and Francis must have died in infancy. Petrarch mentions Dante's *amor* conjugis. Epist. Lib. XII. ep. 12. — Dionisi, Prep. Vol. 2. p. 6.

(2) p. 54.

" the wicked came upon me like a wide breaking in of waters; in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me ..... Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul, the proud waters had gone over our soul (1)." Death is put for guilt and folly; bearing again the same identical sense which it does in the former Canto (as I have shown on the authority of Dante himself) and which is indeed one of the commonest Biblical metaphors (2).

T. —— CXXIV.

M. Biagioli, in his late comment, calls the passage about the three ladies the most obscure and difficult of any throughout the whole Divine Comedy (3): and although I am not in this exactly of his opinion, yet it is certain that the various allegorical subtilties introduced by those who pretend to expound it, suffice to confuse any head. Taking the obvious literal meaning however (in conformity to the unpresuming spirit, of which these comments made candid profession, from the first) I trust, I have been able to divest it of all obscurity. I suppose there is no man at Dante's time of life without some dear deceased friends, who, it is soothing to think, are employed in watching over him from

(1) Job, XXX. 14.—Psalms, CXXIV. 4.
(2) Comment, Hell, Canto 1. p. 13.
(3) Ecco il più difficile, e sin ora il meno inteso luogo della Divina Commedia. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 40.

that lofty region of light and happiness whither their spirits are gone. We all, I hope, share such a pleasing though melancholy persuasion. Dante then, in expressing it, did nothing but what was natural; and, if there is any singularity in his doing so, it is only that he is singularly true to nature. It was an encomium on his own virtue as well as theirs, to represent the three females whom he had admired on earth as become three Saints in Paradise. One of them, he tells us, is there a personification of supreme Philosophy; and what virtues the other two personify (or whether any) he does not say. The first explanation was necessary for his literary purposes; the others were not. Gentucca and Lucia may be held to symbolize Charity and Grace, or any other divine attributes, at the reader's good pleasure. No confusion is produced by it. But what is manifest, is, that they, as well as Beatrice, were once earthly charmers and are now celestial Saints. This is highly poetic, because highly, tender, natural and sublime. There is nothing in this hard to understand; and this, and no more than this, is in the text. If the comments on it are unintelligible, that is the fault of those who wrote them, and not of the poet. Were it true then, that this were 'the most difficult and least intelligible passage in the Divine Comedy,' no eminent poet were ever less liable to a charge of obscurity than Dante.

U. —— CXXVII.

In the last-cited comment are noted the verses which Alfieri had transcribed from this poem; and it is certainly not uninteresting to be thus informed of the opinion of so distinguished a personage as Alfieri: although that opinion is much qualified by his declaration, on a re-perusal of the Divine Comedy some years later, that if he were then to write down every line in it that struck him as worthy of remark, he would not omit 'a single iota of the whole composition; being persuaded more is to be learned from even its very errors, than from the beauties of others(1).' The triplet before us is one of the transcribed. Nothing in fact can be more finished and elegant; and it exhibits a fair proof, that, if harmony and polish are not the characteristics of Dante, it is because he chose they should not be so; and threw them designedly into the back-ground, in order that his sublimity and learning might stand more prominent.

(1) ..... più s' impara negli errori di questo, che nelle bellezze degli altri. Biagioli. Comento. Pref. p. XXXIV.

COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE THIRD.

A. — 1.

I have already said the preceding Cantos are introductory: so that here properly begins Hell, or the first of the three parts, or Canticles, into which the DIVINE COMEDY is divided. Within the infernal gate lies the vestibule, whose inner boundary is a stream named, with classical deference, Acheron; over which the souls are ferried by an old man, who, with the same ingenuous respect for antiquity, is called Charon. After some difficulty, this latter is persuaded to embark our travellers; and, when they appear to be about entering his bark, Dante falls down in a stupor. Such is the subject of this Canto: whose resemblance to the opening of the sixth book of the Aeneid is perceived at once. The vestibule in both is represented as a place of sorrow and frightful sights:

Vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci
Luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia curæ etc. (1)

(1) Lib. VI. v. 273.

although it in both be the road that leads to a sweet region of repose, as well as to the receptacles of pain and guilt, —— to Elysium and Limbo, as well as to Tartarus and the bottomless pit. But it is time to say something of the form of Dante's hell —— a previous acquaintance with which is an almost indispensable requisite. For he here really employed those nine circles, which (groundlessly perhaps) were attributed to the Aeneid by Servius; and I suppose he did so in consequence of having studied that commentator. This then is one of the radical differences between the two poems, (the Aeneid and the Divine Comedy) that an infernal topography is a necessary preliminary to the understanding of the one, and not of the other. Virgil possibly never imagined such divisions, and they may be the mere inventions of the critics; but Dante certainly did: to whom a clear order was, in this particular, of more moment; since he determined on dedicating two thirds of his work to the elucidation of a subject only cursorily introduced in the Aeneid, and therefore dispatched there in a portion of one single book out of twelve.

Substracting all its expiatory punishments (that is the second, third, fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth of the commentator's circles, which, as I before said (1), make in reality one homogeneous

(1) Hell, Comment. Canto II. p. 138.

division, answering to the Infernus purgandorum of Catholics, and are therefore treated of separately in the canticle, Purgatory) the remainder of the Virgilian hell (in substance forming three divisions, that accurately resemble the Infernus puerorum, Infernus sanctorum Patrum, and Infernus damnatorum, of the Romish Church) is the subject of the present canticle. The region then of which it treats is, like that of Virgil, placed within the bowels of our earth; and also divided, as that of Virgil's is represented to be, into a vestibule and nine circles. That the Sybil led down Aeneas by one subterraneous passage, and returned back by another, comprises the whole information there given of the infernal site: and, since they came out close to the spot whereby they had entered, it is impossible to pronounce as to the extent of their peregrinations in the interior; so that it seems to have been the Author's intention, that in this instance the literal sense should be nearly quite lost in the allegorical. Dante, on the contrary, has explained his descent with somewhat of geometrical precision. He too makes his entrance by one door, and his exit by another; but he lets us know that in his way he completely traversed the globe; descending from this our hemisphere, and coming out at last at the antipodes. The exact geographical position of the cave by which he entered is not mentioned (although there have not been wanting some annotators who busied them-

selves in conjecturing it); but, when he is within, he descries the earth to be marvellously scooped hollow in the form of a vast amphitheatre, exactly beneath mount Sion and the City of Jerusalem. This hollow had been caused (as we shall be told) by the fall of Lucifer; who

—— by the Almighty power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky
With hideous ruin and combustion ——

fell with such violence upon the southern hemisphere that he transfixed the, till then solid, globe: a proof that Dante, (contrary to Milton) assented to those, who contend that the celestial war was posterior to the creation of our earth, though prior to that of mankind, —— or, in other words, that it took place between the first and sixth day of Genesis. The spot whereon he fell is said to have become afterwards the garden of Eden (an hypothesis peculiar to the Tuscan poet, I believe) and, after the transgression of our first parents, the island of Purgatory: which antarctic portion of the world might have been represented, in Dante's age, as a land of ghosts —— if not quite reasonably, at least on respectable classical authority; for Cicero had affirmed that there was probably an habitable and inhabited hemisphere opposite to ours, but that its inhabitants must be some race very different from our mortal one(1). Having

(1) Duo sunt habitabiles: australis ille, in quo qui insistunt, adversa nobis urgent vestigia, *nihil ad vestrum genus:* hic autem alter subjectus aquilôni etc. Somnum Scip.

in that fall pierced the centre of the earth, (which I before showed (1), was held to be the centre of the universe) his monstrous bulk there sticks for ever; his legs towering up towards the antarctic and his bust towards this our arctic pole. The cavern occupied by those gigantic limbs seems to contain little else meriting notice; at least we shall find Dante climbing up through it without a remark on any thing beside: and since he gropes his way out on the Antipodes, through a narrow water-cleft, it is clear, that the mouth of the mighty cavity, made on that antarctic surface by the demon's plunge, was soon covered over again. It is the other cavern (the one amid which his bust shoots up within this our own hemisphere) that is supposed to be inhabited by evil spirits and to be laid out in various scenes. That bust however (notwithstanding its prodigious stature) rises from the centre, or bottom, for only a moderate height when compared with the immense vault over head; which vault was formed by the convulsion of nature when in the act of flying from the stricken fiend; for in an earthquake she then vomited forth those crude materials, which (perpendicularly above him) became the mountain afterwards so renowned under the name of Sion, and long looked upon by vulgar opinion as a kind of topmost pinnacle on the surface of

(1) Hell, Comment. Canto II. p. 136.

this our northern half of the globe. Into this subterranean Circus the only gate that leads is situated so near the roof that its position is not very dissimilar from that of one of the doors, or vomitoria (1), of the uppermost story of the Coliseum. And no doubt but the form attributed to this infernal dome is such, that, if it were not for the steams rising in the middle from the abyss, (which in many places obscure the numerous fires that would otherwise illuminate it perfectly) and if the eye could extend its vision enough, the spectator would command at once the entire prospect above, beneath, and around him, as well as a Roman of old in the said amphitheatre, or any other. He would indeed see that this underground rotunda is horridly vaulted above, whereas that of Rome stands with no other canopy than the glorious sky; but, with this exception, he would descry much resemblance in their architectural frame, viz: various seats, or rows, (or circles, as we shall denominate them) built one within the other and gradually narrowing down to the pit, or arena. But, though this first outline of the plans would be somewhat alike, yet their proportions would be very different. The diameter of the latin arena is far less out-measured by that of the upper seat, than is the diameter of the low-

(1) *Vomitoria* in spectaculis unde homines glomeratim ingredientes in sedilia se fundunt. Macrobius. Saturnalia, Lib. VI. Cap. 4.

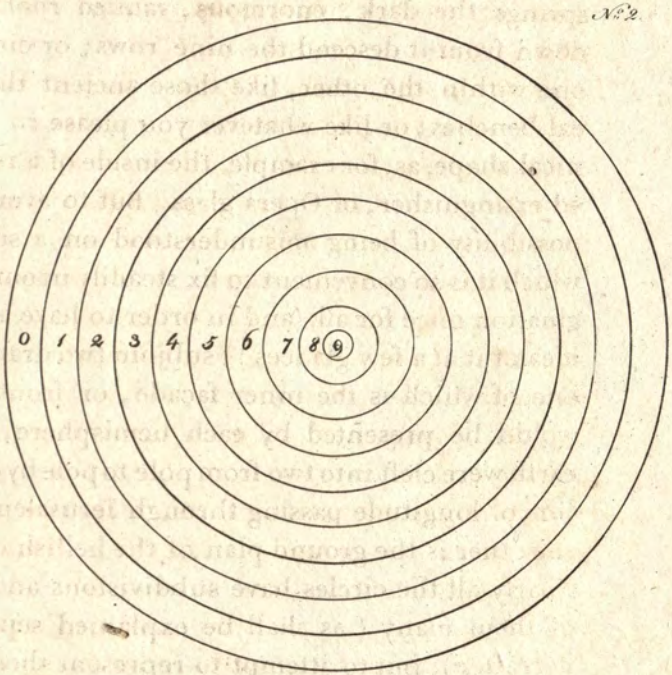
est infernal circle by that of the first; for this can scarcely be calculated at less than three hundred times the other, although there are only nine of them in all. It is matter on which there are learned and voluminous essays (1); yet, though there are really several data in the poem, which to a certain degree lend plausibility to such calculations, (making it probable enough that Dante himself had them in his mind while writing) I do not think it requisite to enter into the discussion. It may suffice to remark that about a quarter of a mile diameter is allowed to the lowest, central pit, or ninth circle, where (as I have said) the head and shoulders of Belzebub emerge; and 315 miles to that of the first circle's vestibule, or corridor. It is in this vestibule we are to be during the present Canto, and it measures (according to calculators) three hundred and fifteen miles across from its wall on one side to its wall on the other, for it runs quite round the first circle; and thus it gives us the greatest width of the whole infernal cavern, exactly in the way that the greatest width of the interior of the Flavian amphitheatre would be ascertained, if a line were drawn from one of the vomitoria of the west side, in the uppermost story, to the eastern vomitorium, precisely facing it. So from this vestibule, all round

(1) Velutello, Comento — Antonio Manetti, circa al sito, forma, e misura dello inferno di D. A. — Giambulari, del sito, forma, e misure ec.

springs the dark, enormous, vaulted roof; and down from it descend the nine rows, or circles, one within the other, like those ancient theatrical benches; or like whatever you please in a conical shape, as, for example, the inside of a reversed extinguisher, or Opera glass. But to avoid the possibility of being misunderstood on a subject which it is so convenient to fix steadily in our imagination once for all, (and in order to have a clear idea of it at a few glances) I subjoin two drawings: one of which is the inner façade, or front, that would be presented by each hemisphere, if the earth were cleft into two from pole to pole by a right line of longitude passing through Jerusalem; and the other is the ground plan of the hellish circus. Nearly all the circles have subdivisions and some of them many (as shall be explained separately hereafter); but to attempt to represent those subdivisions here together in any drawing of moderate size would produce confusion: and as to their measurements, they shall be occasionally noticed; but it would be quite impossible to sketch them intelligibly. That it was Dante's opinion that the sixth book of the Aeneid was intended not as allegorical of any human ceremonial, but as a dream, or rapture of spirit, purporting to convey some idea of what is to come to pass hereafter in hell, as the vision of S. Paul did of Paradise, I have already noticed (1). Here then we have Dante—no

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 84.

N°2.

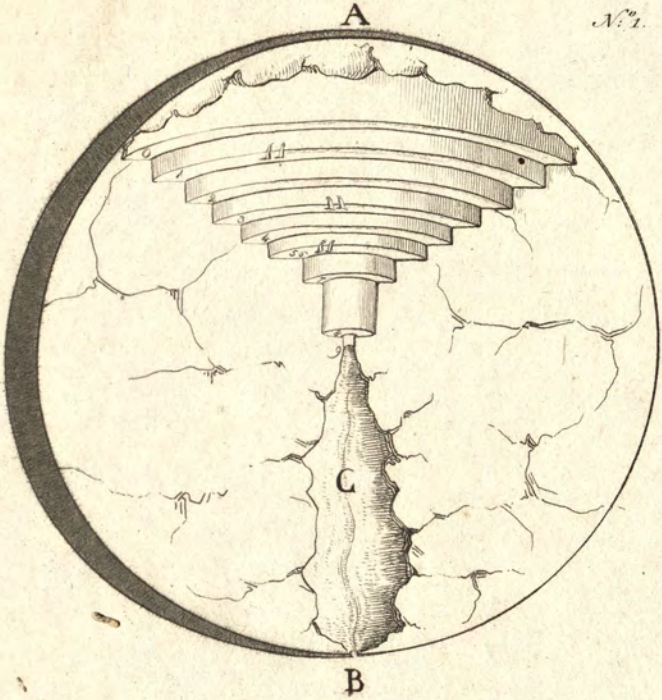


Bird's-eye view or ground-plan of Hell.

a. Vestibule.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.

Circles of Hell.



Interior of a hemisphere of the Earth.

cut through perpendicularly.

A. Arctic-Jerusalem.

B. Antarctic.

C. Void.

o. Vestibule of Hell.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
} Circles of Hell.

mean authority, whether considered as a poet and philosopher, or as a professed student of the Aeneid — corroborating the sentiment of another great authority, Mr. Gibbon; and engaging us to reject the abstruse hypothesis of Warburton, whose attempt to reduce the sixth book of the Aeneid into an allegorical representation of the Eleusinian mysteries, tends to traduce much of what is sublimest in ancient literature, and to transform one of the grandest combinations of theology and poetry into a mystic representation of a quaint mummery (1).

B. — VIII.

Eternal is here synonimous with *immortal;* otherwise it were, not unorthodox as Mr. Biagioli apprehends (2), but a gross blunder to talk of *created,* things being *eternal*. The Angels are not *eternal,* for they had a beginning; and it is to them Dante alludes, as having been created before hell or even the earth, in which hell is situated. It is an opinion on a theological question once much debated — Origen (3) having been of the sentiment here subscribed to by Dante, and S. Austin holding

(1) Gibbon. Miscellaneous works. vol. 4. p. 467.

(2) Secondo i Peripatetici furono ab eterno.... ma noi coi teologi Cristiani...
Comento. vol. 1. p. 50.

(3) Περι Αρχων. Lib. 1. Cap VIII.

the Angels were created at the same time as the rest of the universe (1).

C. —— IX.

The praise of sublimity given to these verses is surely of a better taste than the criticism with which that praise is qualified. 'It is to be regretted that Dante thought it necessary to insert in this inscription on the infernal gate the words *divine power, supreme wisdom, and first love;* which contain a theological definition of the Trinity. That *divine power* and *supreme wisdom* should have concurred in the creation of the place of woe is intelligible; but the addition of the *first love* cannot be read without repugnance (2).' Now, I think, the paragraph in question is not necessarily to be understood as conveying a position of dogmatical divinity, excepting the reader prefers so to understand it: but I am certain the complex idea formed by supreme power, wisdom, and love is of the very highest strain of poetry: and I doubt whether it be possible for the human mind to abstract for a moment any one of those three attributes from its notion of Jehovah. His *love* must be that of universal order or virtue:

(1) De Civ. Dei. Lib. VIII. — Gelli, sopra lo Inferno. vol. 2. p. 40.
(2) Si l'on en excepte ce seul trait, quelle sublime inscription! Hist. Litt. d'Italie. vol. 2. p. 35.

—— He must delight in virtue
And that which He delights in must be happy (1).

Then if it be his love of universal order that maketh him of necessity delight in virtue, and if what he delighteth in must be happy; is it not an inevitable consequence that the self-same attribute must make vice with every infringement of universal order an object of his reprehension, and that that which is reprehended by him must be miserable? They are the opposite but incontestible effects of one single cause. It is then that perfect, boundless love, which takes in the whole creation at a glance, and of which the idea is inseparable from that of justice, which ordains the punishment of the wicked, as well as the recompense of the good: and, instead of objecting to the insertion of that truth upon the infernal gate, it becomes my duty to point it out as one of those sublime and rapid intellectual associations which are the characteristics of rare genius. For as to the theological propriety of the passage, I presume even the slight reflection just made will suffice to demonstrate it: and as to its taste, that is in the best taste, which is best adapted to the purpose in hand. Now what is the purpose of this entire poem, but to vindicate the laws of Providence (2)? or of the verses we are considering, but to inspire a salutary terror? And what can be more calcula-

(1) Mr. Addison's Cato.
(2) Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 63.

ted to do both, than this apposite assertion of the Creator's infinite benignity on the very spot where vulgar minds might incline to forget it, overwhelmed with terror on the threshold of the abyss? — benignity that is conspicuous throughout all his works, but perhaps no where more strikingly so than here where we are constrained to confess, it is the same principle of immeasurable love, which prepares everlasting felicity for the virtuous, that consigns the guilty to hopeless agony. To recall such a truth in such circumstances is to rouse the fancy and understanding to the fullest stretch of which they are capable; is to take in at one view all that we can imagine of heaven, hell, and God — the remotest extremes and their common centre: and thus instead of lingering on details, we are engaged to collect and concentrate the whole resources of our intellect — joys and woes, delights and miseries, pleasure and suffering, every thing beautiful or hideous, most magnificent or most abject, in fine the various dissonant effects of which the most fervid brain can attain any idea — and, referring them at the same time to their Almighty cause, express the entire in a single word, *love,* the love that is illimitable, the love of universal order. It is perhaps this very phrase, *first love,* which the French scholar disdains to translate, that confers the most peculiar grandeur on this passage; — a passage scarcely inferior to any in the whole Aeneid. Its terrific denunciations are

not however to be considered applicable to every succeeding scene of this hell of Dante, any more than the

. . . . . bellua Lernæ
Horrendum stridens (1) . . . . . .

and those other monsters are to that of Virgil. Both bards seem to have put their Muses to an effort in order to render the entrance into the nether realm awful: yet both of them intended to represent a portion of that realm as a seat of tranquillity, to which they could not have meant that anything in those warning sounds should in the least allude. The Elysium of the one (the delicious landscape where Marcellus appeared to his renowned ancestor) is the first Circle of the other, — the calm, lucid rendezvous of multitudes of exalted sages no more exposed to those emotions which ruffle the mind 'with joy or sorrow.' To these no threats of torment can be directed; nor even the words that forbid *hope:* for although it be true that *their* destiny is in general irrevocably fixed who once enter hell, yet is it a position to be received with limitations; at least in the DIVINE COMEDY. From that circle, or hell-of-the-holy-fathers, Scripture informs us that many have ascended to Paradise (nor of the Jewish law alone, for Job was no Jew) who had lived in *hope* until the arrival of the Messiah: so hope *did* exist there. This forces

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 286.

on us the premature reflection, that if (deserting the example of Virgil, who presents us with none of his departed worthies among the Celestials) Dante admits of multitudes having been elevated from the Elysian portion of hell into Paradise, it is in justice to be attributed, not so much to a sublimer fancy in him individually, as to the march of the whole age towards a more general diffusion of various intellectual enjoyments, which Antiquity permitted to be monopolized by a few of its most eminent members exclusively — a change to be attributed entirely to the influence of Christianity. Moreover Dante now enters into hell with full hope of coming out again: hope then *does* exist there. He could not have intended so glaring a contradiction between his words and actions, as to prohibit hope to *all* who enter, at the moment he is himself entering with the brightest hopes. This horrible inscription then is not addressed to all who pass the infernal gate; but to the inhabitants of the lower portions of hell — the hell-of-the-damned. 'That hell is within the centre of the earth,' (writes Boccaccio in his *Genealogy*(1)) 'was not only the doctrine of the Pagans, (*Res alta terra* et caligine *mersas*) but of illustrious Christians too; and, if we consider that the throne of the Divinity is in heaven, from which the centre of our earth is the remotest spot of the universe,

(1) Genealogia Deor. Lib. I. c. XIV.

it seems not unreasonable to describe the prison-house of the guilty as subterranean; in spite of Cicero.' That in Dante's and Boccaccio's day the Ptolemaic astronomy was still in fashion; and that in consequence our globe was deemed the centre, or inmost kernel, of the multifarious universe, which (like a ball containing divers balls) spins in the moveless, empyreal heaven, I have already said (1). According to this system, the only possible mode of *descending* from the surface of this sphere that we inhabit, were to descend *into* it: whence it follows, that to some region supposed to lie within it, and to nothing beside, could the sacred scribes of either the old or the new Testament have intended to refer, when they told us of a *descent from earth to hell*. Herein then necessarily agreed not only Virgil and 'some illustrious Christians,' but all those followers of Ptolemy who, as poets, imagined, or, as philosophers and religionists, inculcated the actual existence of an *infernal* abode,—Greeks, Romans, Jews, or Moslem. Milton was led into a vague and, for that very reason, a sublimer notion by the revolution which had newly taken place in astronomy: one does not see whereabouts he fancied his hell; which is thus veiled in a mystery as conducive to poetry, as to reason. But Dante conformed to what were then the undivided sentiments of the learned; and, in

(1) Hell, Comment. Canto II. p. 137.

placing hell *within* the earth, did no more than unite the popular creed with the astronomical principles set forth by the best among his predecessors and his contemporaries in science and literature.

D. —— XV.

Tuque invade viam . . . .
Nunc animis opus, Aenea, nunc pectore firmo (1).

E. —— XVIII.

We are told in the Convito, on the authority of Aristotle, what is the good of the intellect, viz: truth (2). Here then Jehovah, the well-spring of truth, is designated by *the intellectual Good;* whom the wicked have lost for ever.

F. —— XXVII.

I cannot assert that this passage, however powerful, is equal to this fine one of which it is an evident copy:

Hinc exaudiri gemitus et sæva sonare
Verbera: tum stridor ferri tractæque catenæ.
Constitit Aeneas strepitumque exterritus hausit:
Quæ scelerum facies? O virgo, effare; quibusve
Urgentur pœnis? Quis tantus plangor ad auras? (3)

(1) Aeneid. lib. VI. v. 260.
(2) Siccome il Filosofo nel sesto dell' Etica dice che il vero è il bene dell' intelletto. Convito, p. 96.
(3) Aeneid. lib. VI. v. 557.

In the copy however we find one of those peculiar touches which Dante seldom fails to introduce into his most avowed imitations of the classics, the 'sound of hands' —

Voci alte e fioche e suon di man con elle —

a figure not inferior to any in his original, and a worthy companion of the scriptural *stridor dentium*.

G. —— XXXII.

Error instead of *horror* is the usual reading; but I am induced to adopt the latter without reserve, not because it seems to me the most intelligible and poetical, and much less because it is authorized by Velutello and Lombardi, as cited by Mr. Cary, (for these would be to me no authorities at all, when opposed to the Academy) but on what I take to be the very best, possible authority, —— that of Boccaccio (1): and I am surprised M. Biagioli's good taste did not rather make him do so too than praise the expression of 'binding the head with error,' which is surely more abstruse than beautiful (2). But people are so prone to discover beauties in what they can't understand!

H. —— XXXVII.

It is the nature of our poet's hell to become worse in torment the farther you descend; circles

(1) Comento. Vol. 1. p. 142.
(2) Id. vol. 1. p. 53.

after circles deepening in horror as they narrow down towards the focus of the pit, where Lucifer is impaled. Thus we shall find the first Circle an Elysian abode; and the circles immediately following places of sorrow, it is true, but yet not of excessive torment, nor altogether unallayed by a residue of human feelings. But to this system the vestibule is an exception; for in it we find sufferings so severe, that those exposed to them would prefer to undergo any others. Why such an anomaly? It is indeed an imitation of Virgil, whose crowd of unburied ghosts wander undistinguished "Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell:"

Hæc omnis quam cernis inops inhumataque turba est:
Matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita
Magnanimum heroum, pueri inuptæque puellæ (1).

But Virgil had formed no graduated scale of descent and corresponding woe; he had not laid out his infernal region like an amphitheatre increasing in torment step by step as you go down to its arena: and therefore nothing prevented his shifting the scenes as chance or fancy dictated: so that he even represented in separate portions that region which, consisting not of eternal but expiatory punishments, forms in substance but one indivisible state answering, as I have said (2), to the Purgatory of the Romish Church; and entered

(1) Aeneid. Lib. vi. v. 305.
(2) Hell, Comment. Canto ii. p. 138.

some of them, viz: where the *falso damnati* are to be seen — and such as *projecere animas* — and the *lugentes campi* — and the *arva quæ bello clari frequentant* — before Elysium; and some of them after it, viz: those where souls *exercentur pœnis* — and where some, after drinking of Lethe, are condemned to return and live again on earth, — which is only another kind of purgation. Dante did not allow himself the same liberty; the plan adopted by him was to exhibit bitterer sights the lower he proceeded; the more profound the circle, the more aggravated the guilt and anguish. Why then thus infringe it at the very outset? It is the only instance in which he does so: it is quite out of the natural order, and therefore a peculiar mark of degradation. It was intended for those pusillanimous egoists upon whom our republican poet was desirous of affixing the brand of consummate opprobrium. It would have been hard to do so in any circle of hell: for in the upper ones there were too good company for them and the inflictions were not severe enough; while in the profound abyss it were not easy to deprive them of something of the dignity inseparable from great endurance —

For it were glory there to dwell.

To place them in this hellish outskirt, devoured by vermin and with such a sense of their degraded state that they would rather undergo any curse beside; and to consign them for ever to those

miserable demons, who once were that class of angels represented by the then popular theologians as having been neutral in the celestial war (unfaithful to their Maker, and at the same time too cowardly to join with Satan) was perhaps the sole invention completely answering his purpose: the unnatural punishment of an unnatural crime. The miserable crowds on the infernal frontier in the Aeneid are expiating no errors of their own, but the chance, or negligence, which leaves their bodies without burial: —— an instance of the ancientness of the doctrine, that the conduct of the living may have some influence over the destinies of the dead. But those condemned by Dante to a similar doom in the same place are far from being displayed as objects of pity; and, on the contrary, are guilty of the sin most irremissible in the eye of a legislator —— selfishness. To whatever extent Montesquieu be right in affirming that without much virtue there is no freedom, this at least is certain, that without great public spirit no popular government can long subsist —— a pure democracy not one moment. A law of Solon pronounced death against the citizen who should retire into his house during a tumult in the streets. Of all treasons neutrality was declared the worst; factious demagogues were to be easily pardoned, but temporizing politicians never. That wise man saw that to violence and ambition there was a remedy, but that luke-warmness deprived society of its vital

principle; and that in no State worth preserving the evil-minded are numerous enough to be very dangerous, if the well-disposed are alert and bold. To be persuaded of this Dante had as good reason as Solon could have: they were both chiefs for a season of their native lands, and were both badly requited(1); nor was it a less arduous undertaking to defend the liberty of stormy Florence, than to legislate for Athens. Nothing but an uncommon share of widely diffused patriotism could have long preserved the valuable institutions of either of those cities; and therefore their sage leaders by every means in their power laboured to foster it. Yet the verity of which they had so clear an apprehension belonged not to their own commonwealths alone, but to all times and countries: nor is it indeed merely political, but a general position of ethics. When Man, permitting his passions to overwhelm his reason, falls into vice, the light of his understanding is misdirected, or perhaps dimmed, but not extinguished; he may be reclaimed from his errors and that flame again hallowed may beam with even more than its pristine beauty: but when selfishness has debauched the mind the very passions (which are less ignoble) die, and the intellectual spark is quenched; that fountain of life is not muddied, but dried up. It is a melancholy fact of which the Creator himself informs us, "I would thou wert cold or hot; but because

(1) Both died in exile.

thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (1)."

The principle, on which it is our duty to act, is the same by whatever phrase it may be designated, whether by enlightened self-love, or charity: it is an active persuasion that our least valuable quality is our individuality — that, like the minor wheels of a watch, we should be most prized not for our own insignificant worth, but for our contributing towards an excellent aggregate — and, in short, that we are all parts of one whole and tend to one end; that no individual advantage should be put in competition with the universal good, and that, in fact, such mere individual advantages are always a fallacy, from their being either very instable or quite imaginary: it is a habitual preference of general to particular interests, of permanent to temporary, from a conviction that in reality the general and particular interests must be the same in spite of appearances, and that none who endeavour to advance the mighty plan of Providence can eventually be losers; since their account shall be equitably wound up, probably even in this life (if not exteriorly, yet interiorly by the remuneration of conscience); but that in case it be not so here, it must be so some way or other hereafter. — It is this principle which produces self-devotedness, the virtuous sentiment

(1) Rev. C. III. v. 15–6

whence we may derive almost every great or good action that has ever been executed; while its opposite vice, selfishness, is, I repeat, the moral and political sin beyond redemption. By others this may be discussed theoretically and quietly in their closets: but our Dante had it practically in view from his first entrance into public life to his decease; and that base cowardice of preferring private security to the national felicity, which he severely stigmatised in the present Canto brought Florence during his own career to much shame and anguish, and in process of time to slavery. Freedom indeed knows no other such bane. We rail at parties, (and degenerated into such sanguinary factions as the Guelphs and Ghibellines they certainly are odious, though even they are perhaps less so, than the ungenerous torpor which has replaced them in Italy) yet are parties the very life-spring of a popular government. A partisan may be a sterling patriot: and he should be judged less on a minute dissection of his votes, than on the avowed system of his party. Such a man will ponder long before he espouses any; and, on the recurrence of some paramount question involving the existence of the State, will put his judgment to a new trial: but he will not be unsteady, nor, under the pretence of independence, discover an indifference more dangerous than the machinations of traitors and parasites; and, estimating too highly for trifling the sanctity

of his civil union, he will sacrifice to it many minor considerations, —— will occasionally through deference to his associates change his own opinion, and even sometimes act against it, rather than desert those on whom (although they may decide erroneously on certain points) he believes that his country may, in the main, best rely. These sentiments were so rooted in the breast of our philosophical poet, that he could not restrain himself from venting them in the very place where it was most dangerous, as well as most useless to do so, in the papal court. It was during one of his journeys through France that visiting Clement V. at Avignon and being permitted to be present at a consistory, he felt so indignant at the craft and un-citizen-like tergiversation of the Cardinals, that, rising up, he impetuously apostrophised them in the verses which we are commenting, and left the city (1).

(1) Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016. It was this authority which enabled me (Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 48.) to fix the date of his journey into France. For Clement V. died in April 1314; so it must have preceded that; and on the other hand, a letter of Dante's shows he had not yet left Venice on the thirtieth of March 1313; it must then have been between these periods: for Clement's pontificate began subsequently to Dante's exile in 1302, from which to his letter in 1313, we trace him too rapidly up and down Italy to allow time for any long journey beyond the Alps. That he made one visit to France during his exile is then sure, and that it was on the same occasion he went into England is probable; but not certain, for he was in France previous to his exile and in the quality of Florentine ambassador. That he filled that embassy is asserted by too good an authority to admit of doubt; and Manetti assures us that when he went there during

I. —— XXXIX.

Although Milton did not employ the notion of angels that were neuter in the celestial war, I cannot think that Dante was wrong in availing himself of what was then a vulgar credence built on no less an authority than that of the ingenious and learned, but whimsical Origen. The summary of his doctrine is, that of the angels who neither joined God nor Lucifer there are three divisions —— one inhabiting the stormy air, another the hellish vestibule, and the third an outskirt of Paradise. These last, he says, come down from their station and return to it successively, until the Creator has finally determined on their eternal lot; and are, indeed our souls that are employed to animate our bodies for a while, and ascend back into Paradise when our bodies die (1). This third position of Origen's was condemned by a

his exile it was in no public capacity, but solely for the purpose of study — studiorum dumtaxat gratia. Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. LXIII. Cod. 30.

(1) As for the bad Angels who inhabit the foggy air — εν τω παχει τουτω και περιγειω αερι — he describes them as very vampires, living on blood and greasy fumes, to catch at which they lurk about the earth; for these noxious substances are the natural aliments without which, they could not subsist — καταλληλων τροφων τοις σωμασιν αυτων: and even his commentator and critic, S. Jerome, is of a similar opinion as to their feeding on blood and offal — pasci et saginari cruore. Εις Μαρτυριον. Par. 45. Aristophanes has no better burlesque on Platonism than these unintentional ones.

general Council (1), and so Dante does not employ it; but both the former he does, (the second on the present occasion, and the first hereafter (2)) because neither of them were ever declared heterodox, but were followed by many esteemed ancient Divines; —— although I understand they are not fashionable among modern ones, but have been generally superseded by the opinion of S. Thomas Aquinas, who consigns all the unfaithful spirits without exception to the same fate as their leader, Satan (3). If the destinies of those aerial creatures be representative of such as await ourselves, if Michael and his saints bear resemblance both in conduct and its reward to the followers of virtue, and the guilty be realizations of Satan and Belzebub, it appears to me that the imagining of an intermediate class 'whose only allegiance was not to rebel' and who are objects of scorn both to heaven and to hell, was to give no unnatural type of those ignominious mortals, who are so poisonous to society and so hateful to their Maker.

K. —— XLII.

I follow the interpretation of Monti and Biagioli (4) —— that those despicable spirits were not

(1) That of Constantinople, in 553. — Gibbon. Decline and Fall. vol. VIII. p. 327. — Andrès. Letteratura. vol. VI. p. 35.
(2) Purg. Canto V.
(3) D. Tom. Aquini. Sen. p. 2. dis. 3. and 4.
(4) Questa spiegazione si manifesta pel semplice costrutto regolare

consigned to the bottomless pit, because their presence there would not have been consistent with the glory in which the wicked but yet mighty fiends dwell. This, in fact, is both the most literal construction of the passage, as well as what best agrees with the context; and it prepares the reader for that sublime picture of Satanic majesty, of which we shall see Dante was the inventor, and Milton the noble imitator. The commoner explanation is given at the foot of Mr. Cary's page correctly ("Lest the rebellious angels should exult at seeing those who were neutral and therefore less guilty, condemned to the same punishment with themselves"): but in his translation that gentleman is wrong; for his verses are unsusceptible of the meaning which is probably the true, but is certainly the literal one. Word for word the line is — *Because the wicked could acquire no glory from them;* and this is metamorphosed by him into what seems diametrically opposite, viz: that their presence *would* confer glory on the wicked —

"Lest th' accursed tribe
Should glory thence with exultation vain."

L. — LIX.

Virgil, whom we shall find almost continually

del testo, il quale si è questo: *perchè gli Angeli rei non avrebbero alcuna gloria nella compagnia di essi*. Comento vol. 1. p. 55. — It may not be superflous to observe that *alcuna* in the text means *none, niuna*, in consequence of being proceded by the particle nè. See Vocab. 1.

exciting, rather than repressing the curiosity of his pupil, had told him not to mis-employ his time in enquiring about these crowds; for that they were unworthy his attention — 'look and along'. In this he is obeyed; and of the innumerable multitudes that run round after the flag (whose whirling is no bad emblem of their worthless levity), only one individual is in any way noticed, and even that one without deigning to state his name. It is not difficult to ascertain the person meant; although some moderns have (as usual) done their best to render it so. Dante speaks of one whom, having been personally known to him, he recognises at the first glance — ebbi riconosciuto; and who had renounced some elevated post through baseness of spirit — fece il *gran* rifiuto per viltà. Now the only renunciation of any thing meriting the epithet *great*, during the life of Dante, was that of the Papacy by Celestine V — an individual whom he must have seen frequently. This were enough, if we had not (which we have) the direct evidence of Dante's own children, and of all the earliest of the commentators; for it is only from the Imolese downwards that there are any doubts suggested.

On the fourth of April 1292 died Nicholas IV, and left the sacred college in alarming confusion to the scandal of all Christians; but, above the rest, of the Italians, who were not only religiously interested but politically. Nothing, I think presents

a more piteous spectacle than their country then did. Civil discord at its most cruel height —— every State, every town, every family in dissension —— nearly one half of the population ejected from their homes and living openly by rapine — every castle become a fortress, every house a tower, no law but the sword —— treasons, rapes, robberies, slaughter in fine in every imaginable form almost deprive Italy at that period of the appearance of a nation of rational beings. There appeared to be no remedy half so plausible in that convulsive paroxysm of society as the election to the Popedom of a good and able man, who should change the impious system introduced by many of his predecessors, and, instead of fomenting, endeavour to restrain the factions of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, and re-establish something like law and morals. To succeed in this it was also necessary that he should be an Italian: and to engage the conclave to close so shameful an interregnum in the Church by making such an election, our poet (who, although only in his twenty-eighth year(1) and in the freshness of mourning for his Beatrice, had been already on several important embassies and, amongst other places, at Rome) directed a solemn letter to the Cardinals (2). Whether this awakened

(1) Hell. Comment. Canto II. p. 133.

(2) Negri. Ist. Scritt. Fior. — This seems to have been unknown to Sismondi (Hist. des Republiques Italiennes. Tome IV. p. 73—182.) whose account of Dante, otherwise not very inexact, is obscured by a theory to be supported against irrefragable testimony.

their consciences, or that the majority had already become ashamed of their ambitious disputes, or that it entered into the scheme of one of them to insure his own preferment by deferring it for a few months, or that they were terrified by the Roman fever of which several of them had already died and of which others were ill, — their votes were at length united in favour of Peter Morrone, a hermit of fair reputation; who on the fifth of July, 1294, assumed the mantle by the title of Celestine V. Great was the satisfaction caused by this event, and our author joined in it most cordially; not only on account of Peter's blameless manners, but also because thus seemed baffled the wiles of one of the purpled candidates, whose foul conduct and guilty principles could not by any mask have been entirely concealed from so penetrating an eye as Dante's. Three dignitaries (1)

(1) An Archbishop, and two bishops. The mode of his nomination is a good example of what Mr. Gibbon calls *the uncertain breath of a Conclave*. Cardinal Latino having told his brethren one day that a holy man had had a dream that they should all die before two months unless they agreed on some one to fill the vacant chair of S. Peter, he who was afterwards Boniface VIII replied sneeringly 'I suppose this is one of the visions of your Peter Morrone.' 'It is' (answered Latino) 'and the revelation thus made to that man of God proves that the gifts of the Holy-ghost render him worthy to rule over the faithful:'— on which he was voted Pope. The threat of death to men who had seen their companions expire and were themselves ill of the same fever had no doubt much effect; but the whole seems to have been a plot of Boniface VIII, who, not being able to gain his election at that moment, had formed a plan of insuring it shortly after. Sismondi. Hist. des Repub. Ital. Vol. IV. p. 76.

were sent in procession to the mountain where the hermit had his cell to inform him of his election, and, when the poor mendicant in astonishment at their rank would have prostrated himself at their feet, they flung themselves down at his to crave a benediction from his Holiness; innumerable were the crowds that flocked along the roads leading to his retirement (1); as he past, all bent their knees before him, many from reverence for his sacred character, and some too from wonder at seeing a beggar transformed into a Monarch; and, that his entry into the decorated streets of Aquila might want no possible brilliancy ecclesiastical or civil, two troops of royal guards in various and rich uniforms, and mounted on caparisoned horses of the two finest breeds of the south and north of Europe, were super-added to the usual costly ones of the Papacy; and, while the ass, on which the 'servant of the servants of God' rode, proceeded in slow pomp amid Princes and Bishops and Cardinals, to the sound of every kind of sweet music and amid clouds of incense, over a carpet of flowers profusely strewed by white-robed youths in many vivid emblematic patterns, (the balconies overflowing with groups of the noblest and most

(1) In fact it was they prevented his escape: for his first impulse was to run away; but finding every avenue crowded, he was compelled to return to his cell. He indeed appears to have been a man of the weakest intellects; so that Boccaccio calls him huomo idiota. Comento. Vol. 1. p. 148.

beautiful Italian ladies) its bridle was held by two crowned heads, those of Naples and of Hungary. But this universal gladness, and all the fond speculations on the virtue of the Pope, and on the calm it was to diffuse from the Alps to the Fa[illegible] were soon found fallacious. His only considerable actions were both of eminent detriment to his country — the creation of 12 Cardinals, almost all Frenchmen, in order to flatter Charles II of Naples; and a law in favour of a Pope's abdicating, which had always been held impossible. The natural consequence of the former not long after was the removal of the Papal court to Avignon: and as to the latter, though not calculated indeed to give often rise to abuse, in Celestine's case it did; for he availed himself of it immediately, and after only five months Pontificate set out to return to his hermitage on the thirteenth of December, 1294; leaving the Church as a defenceless prey to the rapacity of his importunate successor — to the Cardinal whom Dante had feared so much, and whom writers agree in depicting as a monster of avarice and pride; so that even the devout Imolese says of him: 'and to avow the truth he was a magnanimous *sinner* (1).' This abdication being however considered of most dubious orthodoxy, the Cardinal in question, (Caetan) who took the title

(1) Et de rei veritate fuit magnanimus peccator. Com. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. Vol. 1. p. 1039.

of Boniface VIII, was for some time generally considered an antipope. Most men disapproved of the abdication on the score of its being an innovation; and even those who attributed infallibility to the Popes in other respects, denied it to them here. But to such as had an opportunity of looking behind the scenes, the abdication was invalid on a stronger plea — the fraud by which it had been obtained. From the moment of Celestine's accession, Cardinal Caetan attached himself to his person; scarcely leaving him for an instant either by night or day — for he even slept in the same chamber (1) — he endeavoured by every means to play upon the Pontiff's infirmities; so that he at last obtained an entire ascendancy over his weak understanding, and employed it in a way to render the holy Father ridiculous as well as miserable. By his advice Charles II seems to have succeeded in his request for twelve new Cardinals. After which, the purpled conspirator, seeing his companions repentant for their choice, undertook to engage Celestine to abdicate, if they promised to elect whomsoever he, the Cardinal, should point out — a proposition that was universally agreed to. Nor content with this, he waited upon Charles II one night, and, fearing he might oppose his election, said to him: "Sire, your Pope

(1) . . . habitando di dì e di notte con lui, perchè il Papa si fidava molto di lui. Buti. Comento. Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1006.

Celestine has both the will and the power to serve you, but does not know how; put me in his place and, besides the will and the power, I'll know how to be useful to you. (1)" The Simonical bargain was struck; and the twelve new-made Cardinals were to give him their votes. The probability is that this entire plan was in Caetan's head even previous to the nomination of Morrone. There now only remained to prevail on him to abdicate. From his installation, his timidity and scruples had been sedulously fomented by the wily Cardinal; who, far from engaging him to preside in the Consistory, encouraged him to shut himself up for the most part of every day in a cell which he had built in the Palace in resemblance of his hermitage on the mountain (2); as if the only way to save his soul was to retire from the Court, instead of labouring to reform it. The Cardinal, with the most affected tenderness and piety, never ceased intreating him to reflect on his weakness and inexperience, and how impossible it were for his slight shoulders to bear up with the public burthens, or for such a feeble hand to curb the Simony and all the inordinate vices of the sacred College; —— and not only unvealing to him the foibles, perhaps crimes, of his ecclesiastical courtiers, but even

(1) Gio. Villani. Lib. VIII. Cap. 6. — Sismondi. Hist. des Republiques Ital. vol. IV. p. 79.

(2) . . . arctam et eremeticam camerulam . . . .
Benvenuti Im. Com. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. T. I. p. 1038.

inventing others, and painting them in the most horrific colours, and, after inveighing against the odious cares of business, recalling to his mind the tranquillity and innocence of his eremitical life, he at last cajoled the trembling Pontiff into the issuing of the Bull of abdication. Nor were moral considerations alone employed — as if salvation were incompatible with the guidance of a realm whether spiritual or temporal; the chronicles of the time enumerate the facetious mechanical contrivances to which his Eminence had recourse in order to dupe his High-priest and sovereign (1). This he did: and, in a full meeting of Cardinals, Celestine taking the Papal crown from his head, and laying down the mantle, solemnly abdicated his high station. Scarcely had the mantle left his hand, when Cardinal Caetan took it up; and, reminding the by-standers of their promise, he asked whether they remained faithful to it, and would elect that man Pope on whom he should put the mantle? They replied in the affirmative;

(1) Amongst others was an apparition of pretended angels, while his Eminence roared through a speaking-trumpet 'abdicate! Celestine, abdicate!' — as if it was a voice from heaven. Ginguèné (Hist. Litt. d'Italie. Vol. 2. p. 205) cites the Pecorone (Gior. XIII. Nov. 2.) for this, not seeming aware that it was matter of real history, before it was borrowed by novellists. As soon as the tale was bruited, the whole clergy of Naples went in a body to conjure his Holiness not to abdicate; but their voice was considered less impressive than one directly from Paradise. Mr. Cary is inexact: viltà does not mean "base *fear*" here, but baseness of soul in general; not menaces, but craft was employed; it was the head rather than heart of Celestine that failed.

some perhaps inveigled by false, and private promises in favour of themselves, and others prepared to give their votes as he should decide, in obedience to their patron, Charles II; but none surely suspecting what was to succeed, and that one hitherto known for the most fawning pretences to religion and humility should all at once assume a sacrilegious boldness that has been seldom equalled. For having made them swear to maintain their promise, and registered their oaths, and with notarial precision having obtained from each such security as rendered them irrevocable — fatte le cautele — he rose from his usual bending posture, and lifting up those lids which had for so many years half covered his down-cast eyes, (then mild as a novice's, but now flashing with fire, that indicated the daring and abysses of an unfathomable ambition) he flung the mantle of supremacy over his own shoulders, grasped eagerly at the Tiara, put it on his elevated brow, and striding to the chair of S. Peter, while even his feeble voice was transformed into one of loud command, thrust forth his toe as he sat down, and called upon the thunder-stricken conclave to kneel to their Lord and master, the maker and remover of kings, the chief of Christendom and the world (1).

(1) Buti. Comento. Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1006. Sismondi appears not have known these particulars; and refers Boniface's election entirely to the influence of Charles II. This influence were in fact quite sufficient of itself; but the story of the mantle is too characteristic both of the man and the conclave not to give it

Thus began to be verified the second part of the saying of his unfortunate predecessor, that 'as he entered the Popedom like a fox, he would reign like a lion, and die like a dog (1).' Nor was the third part to be less true. As to the deposed vicar of God, his hopes of returning to his hermitage were dissappointed. Well aware of the necessity of securing his person, in order to prevent his retracting an abdication which many considered null and void from the beginning, Boniface carried him away to Rome and had him kept in strict confinement. At last however he escaped, to the great dismay of the Pontiff; but it was only to his hermitage. Thither messengers (2) were soon dispatched to bring him back; so the poor old man again fled and sought an asylm in a gloomy forest of Apulia. There he remained some months: and though herbs, roots, and water sufficed to keep life together in a few recluses who there aspired to

(1) Intrasti ut vulpes: regnabis ut leo: morireris ut canis. Benvenuti Im. Com. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. T. 1. p. 1219.

(2) Boniface's camerista and the Abbot of Monte-Cassino. The wretched old man, pleading the promises which had preceded his abdication, intreated to be allowed to finish his days in that rude spot, binding himself never to open his lips to a mortal, except his brother hermits. But while the Camerista was returning with this answer, he met another coming with possitive orders that the victim should be carried to Rome at whatever cost — by force if necessary. But in the mean time he had escaped, having been warned of his danger by a friend. Guided by a single friar he penetrated by unknown paths into the fastnesses of the forest. Every thing conspired against the decrepit fugitive; it was lent, and the usual severities of that desert were, as far as possible, increased.

emulate the glories of the Thebaid, it is wonderful they could have supported one of advanced age like Celestine. Even there his relentless pursuers discovered him; so, flying, he embarked to cross the Adriatic, but being driven back by a storm, fell into the hands of his enemies at Viesti, at the foot of mount Garganus. Thence he was dragged (1) to a fortress in Campania and consigned to the most rigorous, solitary imprisonment. No one was ever permitted to speak to him; and his dungeon was so confined, that he could not lie down in it without pillowing his head on the same stone step on which he stood during the day to celebrate mass. He had asked for two friars of his order to be permitted to say office with him; but they soon fell victims to the fetid atmosphere emitted by his dungeon. Thirty-six men guarded him day and night; and at last, whether dispatched by some quicker poison, or by that no less sure one of the noxious vapours in which he dwelt, Celestine V closed his eyes about twenty two months after his elevation to a throne. But his persecutions did not end even with death. The relentless Pontiff

(1) He was made to travel by night: in order to prevent his exciting too much compassion. Yet, though he here failed to liberate himself miraculously, he was in the highest repute for miracles. Some said he was born in the habit of a monk, others that the figure of Christ descended from a crucifix to sing psalms with him, and others that a harmonious, celestial bell was rung in his ear by Angels every night at the hour of prayer to awake him. Sismondi, Hist. des Repub. Ital. vol. IV. p. 75.

had his lifeless remains ignominously flung into a hole within a sorry chapel on one of the bastions; no funeral rites were performed over them; and the grave was made of the extraordinary depth of thirty yards, in order that they might never be found or removed into a more honorable place (1). But his individual fate was of slender importance to the world in comparison with the succession of his rival: and, as to Dante, it was his utter ruin, for Boniface was his implacable enemy. Their enmity was indeed reciprocal and natural; being both men of great talents, and of principles as opposite as vice and virtue. The former's exile was, if not caused, at least rivetted by his clerical antagonist; who, in his turn, besides being consigned by verse to an immortality of infamy, probably experienced its fatal effects even during his mortal career; for the invectives so published against him might very well have been, at least in part, cause of his misfortunes: —— misfortunes, which (as I before observed (2)) surpassed even the most vindicative desires of the exasperated bard; whose heart could not but relent at seeing a high-minded Pope exposed to indignities in a prison which his spirit could ill brook; so that after his liberation the very memory of them set him mad, and he foamed and gnawed himself to death (3).

(1) Gio. Villani. Lib. VIII. cap. 5.
(2) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 73.
(3) Gio. Villani. Lib. VIII. cap. 43.

All these, and innumerable other evils, brought about by Celestine's abdication, there is no denying it was in itself an unfortunate and bad act: the guilt of the actor however depends upon his motives; and whether Dante in attributing them to 'baseness of spirit,' is borne out by historical facts, as I have fairly narrated them, every reader can judge for himself. The insertion of Celestine V as a Saint in the Roman calendar argues no error in Dante as a Catholic; for, in Boccaccio's words, 'Celestine was not canonized until the Pontificate of John XXII; so that up to that day it was licit for every one to believe what he pleased about him (1).' It is moreover certain that Celestine's canonization was never intended as a panegyrick on his conduct as a Pope (in which light Dante criticises him here); but on his mildness and piety as a hermit — a position from which Dante dissented not, as is evident from his joy at his elevation: but it is quite unjust in a late commentator (2) to accuse the poet of being inconsistent; as if he praises Celestine in Canto XIX. of this same Canticle where we on the contrary shall find he does not utter a syllable about him. Having here blamed him so severely, he is never guilty of the inconsistency of praising him anywhere: and

(1) Comento. vol. 1. p. 149. This Canticle, Hell, was at latest published in 1308 (Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 45) and John's election only took place August the seventh, 1316. Priorista Fiorentino p. 78.
(2) Poggiali. Ed. Livorno, 1807. vol. 3. p. 45.

if we shall not see him suffering among the wicked Popes, it is because he was not wicked; although his 'baseness of spirit' was perhaps still more injurious to mankind than wickedness would have been, and because he had on that account been already exhibited in this ignominious vestibule. Petrarch indeed in his treatise De Vitâ Solitariâ commends Celestine's love of solitude; and those who are more struck by the show of a throne than aware of the momentous duties it imposes, may proclaim his abdication an effort of virtue. But humility and a taste for retirement, however meritorious in themselves, can never, when they interfere with a great positive duty, be a good excuse for the breach of it. The hermitage might have exposed the sanctity of the ascetic to less temptations, and been more agreeable to speculative devotion and internal peace than the bustle of the world. Envy is frequently the offspring of ignorance: the bulk of mankind who flatter their superiors deny them sometimes too their merited encomium; and, descrying only the lustre of power, are blind to its cares: yet if the love of sway be very genial, that of tranquillity is less uncommon than many avow; and a greater number than we may suspect would feel no unwillingness to relinquish the cumbrous trappings of state, could they adopt the comfortable doctrine that every individual has a right to consult his own quiet in the first place, whatever be his rank, or office.

But such ethics are unsound; and tend to deprive mankind of the hopes of ever having an upright magistrate, at least of one with purer sentiments than ambition. Of all masks the readiest to put on is religion: sloth, ignorance, selfishness may be concealed by it, not to say the basest passions; and sometimes the wearer deceives not only others, but himself. Celestine was, it is likely, an instance of the latter, fancying his deed to be one of Christian self-denial: yet he deserted his post in the moment of danger, left all the good undone which might have been effected by a worthy bishop and Sovereign, and (since his abdication was by many considered illegal) exposed his Church to the indecency of a civil war and schism, two Pontiffs to the degradation of a prison, and one to the guilt of murder and suicide. That he should have been stigmatised then as a mean spirit is surely neither unjust nor strange; but it is so, that after the lapse of ages and the subsidence of factions, Dante is still accused of sacrilege towards a canonized Pope, or badly defended by putting an incongruous explanation on his words, and that to vindicate him it is necessary to recapitulate all the above circumstances.

Few points are surer than that Celestine was the person here meant by Dante. His son Peter says . . . . est Papa Celestinus quintus qui potens ita esse sanctus in Papatu ut in heremo, Papatui, qui

sedes est Christi, pusilanimiter renuntiavit (1): Jacob.... Papa di Roma nominato Celestino per viltà il grande ufficio Apost. Rom. rinnunziò (2). Boccaccio, and the Riccardian M. S. and the Ottimo (3) are of a similar sentiment. These were all contemporaries of Dante, and therefore most likely to be conscious of his meaning. Later, but also very ancient, commentators proposed Esau, or Diocletian. But these, who lived ages before him, he could scarcely have *recognized;* he might almost as reasonably be represented as recognizing the Emperor Charles V, who lived ages after him. Lombardi proposes one of the Cerchi, a Florentine (4);

(1) Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. XL. Cod. 38.

(2) Id. Id. Id. Cod. 10.

(3) The M. S. comment so entitled by the Accademicians (and which I forgot to enumerate in the note, Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 25) is Cod. 19. Plut. XL. in the Laurentian library; but I have found in the Riccardian a fairer copy of the same M. S. and quite complete, containing the three Canticles, Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso. It is Cod. 1004.

(4) If Mr. Cary had confined himself to pointing out Celestine without entering at all into the controversy, there would be no blaming him; but when he allows Lombardi's invention to take up so much precious space as four entire lines in his little notes, one regrets that he omits (what from its antiquity alone deserves more notice) the hypothesis of Esau. I think it false certainly; but it seems to have existed even among Dante's contemporaries — judging by the ut credo of Peter Alighieri (for as to him and his comment, they have been too long received as genuine to fall before the arguments of Dionisi, Serie di Anneddoti. Num. 2.), and by the chi costui si fosse ec. of Boccaccio; while the Imolese, who was *almost* contemporaneous with our poet, absolutely asserts he meant Esau — dico brevius quod fuit Esau. Benvenuti Imol. Com. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. vol. 1. p. 1029. It is moreover a pity Mr. Cary did not word his translation so as to be sus-

but if there were nothing else to object, his obscurity is enough: whereas against Celestine there can be no objection chronologically, or otherwise. That he was a Pope is none; when those installed in that elevated rank were notorious malefactors, Dante never spared them: on the contrary, we shall see that it is against them his most acrimonious anathema is pointed; as if to every other cry for vengeance was here added that of his disgraced religion. But with regard to poor Celestine, it is not improbable but it might have been respect for the Tiara which prevented his being directly named. The indications in the text identified him at the time; and as to handing his name to posterity, it might be spared without any material breach of equity; since it is acknowledged that, notwithstanding the calamities he occasioned, he was a holy, not a flagitious man (1).

M. —— LXXIII.

Dic, ait, o virgo, quid vult concursus ad amnem?
Quidve petunt animæ? (2)

N. —— LXXVIII.

Virgil repeats that nothing is worthy of attention

ceptible like the original of any of the above explications; but his making viltà 'base *fear*' prevents the possibility of applying the passage either to Esau, or Diocletian.

(1) Fue di sancta vita et aspra penitentia. Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. XL. Cod. 19.

(2) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 328.

until the Vestibule is quite traversed, which it only is on arrival at Acheron, the infernal stream that incloses the first Circle.

Dante rose ere the age of Classical erudition. Latin, and even Greek were indeed still extant: but the latter was very imperfectly known; and the former, barbarously though fluently spoken and worse written, served for little better than lawers and scholastic disputants, or for dull hymns, or at best some wretched mystical farce. It was Dante and his two successors that awoke the world to ancient literature: —— illucentibus ingeniis Dantis, Petrarchæ, et Boccaccii reviviscere cæperunt litteræ Græcæ et Latinæ (1). The two latter of those distinguished men claim a greater share in the cultivation of Greek; but the other did not neglect it. To prove this his numerous quotations from the Iliad and Odyssey suffice; for whence but from the originals could he take them at a time when they yet lay untranslated? The fact of neither of those poems having been then translated is known to literary antiquaries; and we have an additional testimony in the declaration made by Dante himself: 'Homer has never been turned from Greek into Latin (2).' I presume it superfluous to show,

(1) Hump. Hod. Lond. 1742.

(2) Omero mai si mutò di Greco in Latino. Convito. p. 64. In the Monarchia we read, et hujus, ut ait Homerus, est regulare omnes, et leges imponere aliis — Lib. 1. p. 8: and in the Vita Nuova, di lei si poteva dire quelle parole del poeta Omero, ella non pareva figliuola d' uom mortale ma di Dio — p. 2: and in the Monarchia we have (con-

that the translations of Homer in any of our modern languages were long subsequent to those in latin. From what source then could any one have at that time quoted? Manetti(1) in saying Dante was ignorant of Greek must therefore have only meant that he was not profoundly versed in it, which was no improper form of speech in so accomplished a hellenist as that biographer. In fact Dante enriched his tongue by many greek phrases; and, by frequent references to the poets, historians, and philosophers of Greece, was the opener of the path along which his two illustrious successors pressed so eagerly a few years later: and he not only directed public attention to those ancient sages, but even condescending to interfere practically, laboured to give the education of youth a similar impulse (2). But there then existed circumstances to render it highly expedient that the study of latin should precede that of Greek. Very few greek books were in Italy, and the latin classics were yet asleep on

trary to his usual mode) even Greek in Greek characters, επειχειαν— Lib. 1. p. 22. When Gradenigo then, recanting his first opinion, asserted he could not discover a single word unquestionably Grecian on a re-perusal of all Dante's compositions, he stamped himself a very careless peruser. Lett. Greco-Italiana. 1739.

(1) Vita Dantis. M. S. Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. LXIII. Cod. 30.

(2) See his sonnet in Lami's Delicæ Erud. vol. 17. p. 118. It was addressed by Dante to his great friend, Bossone, congratulating him on the progress of young Bossone in *Greek* and French at the very time Dante himself was his tutor, or at least superintended his education:

. . . del car figliuol vedi presente
Il frutto che sperasti, e si repente
S'avvaccia ne lo stil *Greco*, e Francesco!

the dusty shelves, or crumbling in the lumber-rooms of the Monasteries. To restore these to light was a primary, perhaps indispensable step towards the revival of letters; and to this therefore Dante more particularly applied himself, with a judgment that needs no better vindication than the astonishing rapidity with which they quickly began to flourish throughout the whole of the south of Europe. To Virgil, Ovid, Livy and Cicero the productions of Athens naturally succeeded: and that the most indefatigable promoter of the cultivation of Greek, Boccaccio, looked up to Dante as his prime leader in the career of universal literature is testified both by his conduct and his writings; for he dedicated a portion of his life to the public explanation of the Divine Comedy, and in his most learned lucubrations never tired lavishing on the Author such venerable titles as, 'the divine poet and philosopher, the awful, sapient father, the unquestionable authority, my chief guide in this my review of the theology of ancient Greece and Rome (1).' Happily for the world, a desire of benefitting it is so kindled in noble minds that it is nearly impossible to damp their ardour; misfortunes, wrongs, neglect, ingratitude are vain; such injustices only expand, not enfeeble that gratuitous love which repulsed by individuals attaches itself to human nature in the abstract, and finds in that ideal object something more commensurate

(1) Genealogia Deor. passim.

with its own boundlessness and purity. Boccaccio, persecuted while he lived, and now only represented as the author of his most juvenile, though beautiful production, the Decameron, (by writers who revile him for the levities that stain it, without adding that he sincerely repented of them in his manhood, or saying any thing of his highest qualities, patriotism and erudition) condemned his old age to grief and penury in order to bequeath a collection of Greek M. S. S. to his not sufficiently thankful country. Dante acted still more like a patriot, and fared worse; this is not the occasion to dwell on either the sufferings of his life, or the chastness of his pen: but I am forced to remark, that the hope of being useful was among his inducements for employing continually the fables of Antiquity, and such must be his excuse should any one accuse him of doing so too immoderately. His aim was forwarded by uniting classical allusions with the most interesting occurrences of his own day, and the whole machinery of the ancients with verses so popular from their topics that they were in the mouths of every one as soon as published. In a short period the fictions of Heathenism became nearly as well known to the modern Tuscans, as to their Pagan ancestors, and even at this day the lowest class retain vestiges of that knowledge which astonish foreigners, and are not discoverable in any country but Italy.

O. —— LXXXV.

Nothing can be clearer than the original —— 'never hope to see heaven,' non isperate mai veder lo cielo. 'Heaven' is here not a mere latinism synonimous with sky, or day; but evidently means Paradise: for to tell the souls they shall never see day has no Christian propriety; but to pronounce their eternal exile from Paradise is a fearful, orthodox malediction. It is strange a Divine should so mis-conceive it; but Mr. Cary not only translates cielo *sky*, but interpolates an *again*, so that if he gives the passage any meaning, it is at least totally different from what the author wrote:

. . . . " Hope not
Ever to see the sky again! " . . .

This might do in Virgil's hell, where such a return to life was held possible; but what has it in common with this Catholic poem?

In the last line of the tiercet Dante seems to have thought on the Koran, which exactly points out the same things, " eternal darkness, intense heat, and excessive cold " as the three great instruments of torture in hell (1).

P. —— XCIII.

Charon could embark no living being *in general*;

(1) Sale, Sect. 4.

Umbrarum hic loc[illegible]s est . . . . . .
Corpora viva nefas [illegible]vgia vectare carina (1) . . .

and an approaching verse will explain the passage still more, by showing he was not wont to receive any virtuous soul (2). According however to the hypothesis on which this poem is built, the favoured Aeneas, who was both virtuous and alive (3), had long before crossed in Charon's boat; so he could not have meant to say that it was quite incapable of sustaining a human body — a remark which removes much of the mysticism of the commentators by giving to the 'other ways, havens, and shore' and the 'lighter bark' in the next tiercet a mere literal meaning, and making them indisputably allude to the beauteous, airy pinnace, which we shall see skimming over the waters, which it scarcely wrinkles, and, laden with virtuous souls, sail to Purgatory under the superintendance of a 'divine bird', a 'celestial pilot (4).' Charon then means plainly to inform Virgil and Dante that there is such a heavenly wherry, which better becomes — più convien — such guiltless creatures than his own.

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 390.
(2) Quinci non passa mai anima buona. Inf. Canto III. v. 127.
(3) Corruttibile ancora. Inf. Canto II. v. 14.
(4) L'uccel divino . . . . . .
. . . . . .
Con un vasello snelletto e leggiero
Tanto, che l'acqua nulla ne 'nghiottiva.
Da poppa stava 'l celestial nocchiero. Purgatorio, Canto II.

Q. —— XCV.

The whole is, in substance, from the Aeneid:

. . . ramum hunc (aperit ramum qui veste latebat)
Agnoscas. Tumida ex ira tum corda residunt.
Nec plura his (1). . . .

but how far sublimer is the simple assertion of the Italian —— 'It's willed thus, where power and will are one! Enough!' That is, such is the pleasure of Omnipotence.

In comparison with these few unadorned words how trivial is the bribe of a golden twig, and, if it were not for habitual veneration, I might add how childish! It may be urged in support of the Roman, that our modern is indebted for this superior beauty to the more refined nature of his creed, rather than to his own taste. And without controverting the position entirely, I may be permitted to remark, that most lofty notions of the Divinity were held by many Pagans, as we see even in the hyperbole of Horace nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum. So that it would not have been strange had the majestic Epic Muse exhibited her pious Aeneas as authorized to visit the world of shades, not by any secondary contrivance, but by the direct will of an all-powerful Providence. 'The boatman of the *livid* lake' is clearly from the vada

(1) Lib. VI. v. 406.

livida (1) of Virgil: but it seems no more than just, in noticing how much Dante copied, not to conceal what he improved; in almost all his imitations of the Classics he introduces alterations that appropriate them to himself; and, in the present passage at least, it will surely be confessed, that he struck out what was feeble, (the gold rod) and replaced it with a figure of peculiar grandeur.

R. —— XCIX.

Terribili squalore Charon cui plurima mento
Canities inculta jacet, stant lumina flammâ (2).

S. —— CV.

This burst of agony of the forlorn ghosts, on hearing, not the debate between Virgil and Charon, but the denunciation of their own lasting woe, is (as well as their pacing along with sobs the bank where the guilty congregate as soon as their mortal frames expire) a circumstance added to the Latin original: with these exceptions, the entire is from the Aeneid.

T. —— CXI.

That to put our mental faculties on wing it is first necessary to make an impression upon our senses, is one of the oldest ethical axioms: and

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 319.
(2) Id. Id. v. 298.

from it originate all our descriptions of a future state. It is superfluous to repeat citations from S. Paul and the Fathers to prove that they considered such a state as above human comprehension; which is, in other words, to say, that what they describe there is to be received as merely allegorical: but it may be proper to inculcate a similar truth with regard to the Ancients. They also certainly understood the persons in futurity as ideal. So Cicero, alluding to the very particular we are now considering — the representation of Hell: 'Who does not see that the prodigies talked of are nothing but the inventions of poets and painters, and that it would be insanity to suppose their possessing any real existence? (1)' The descriptions then on this head in Virgil and Homer were considered quite as imaginary before, as after their insertion in a poem; they were first the machinery of religion, and, after being so hallowed, were adopted in poetry; in both cases they were artificial resources never believed in as actually true, but as very efficacious in moving the mind; theological, or poetical, they were always allegories (2). It remains to inquire, whether the Christian, or the Pagan allegories be the more conducive to the

(1) . . . Adeone me delirare censes ut ista esse credam? Tuscu. Lib. 1. cap. 6.

(2) The *abuse* of allegory may merit the lordly irony of Mr. Gibbon (Decline and Fall. Vol. IV. p 71.); but when we attempt pictures of what we know is incomprehensible, it seems to me both sensible and candid to present them, not as truths, but as types of the truth.

proposed end, of making an impression on the intellect through the senses? Here it is the end alone that is of importance, and whatever means are best calculated to attain it are the best: for these in each of the Creeds of which we treat are equally accidental modes, and in themselves pretend to no greater weight, than any other 'unsubstantial fabrics of a Vision.' The Paradise of Christianity has a moral purity of its own, and consequently has given rise to a celestial imagery of a very lofty nature. The fables of Greece and Rome are too unrefined ever to be admitted round the throne of the First wise and fair; — and a man of mighty genius who attempted it succeeded badly. A reader of the Lusiad must have acquired a full knowledge of its many beauties, before he can forgive the introduction of Bacchus and Mars into a Christian poem; and their appearance there gives rise to some petulancy among critical wits, who can readily ridicule that incongruity, without perhaps being able, as linguists, to taste the merits that redeem it amply.

Even the nod of Jupiter shaking his ambrosial curls is a sorry figure in comparison with the attributes of Jehovah; and a view of Heaven by one of our Divines of moderate talents is finer than the finest in the classics. — But not so in hell; where the belief of a disciple of Jesus differs in little from that of a follower of Polytheism: for they equally profess the doctrine of some guilt being capable

of expiation, and of some being punished eternally. Here therefore a modern is on no vantage-ground, and is left to his own single strength in a contest with the most distinguished inventors of Antiquity: nay, he labours under a disadvantage, since his rivals have their great names, and time, a great authority, in their behalf. Were his new machinery as powerful as theirs, it were scarcely to be hoped it could produce as overwhelming an effect. But is it as powerful? Our pictures of ineffable delight are far superior to the most brilliant fancies of the Heathen poets: our hell fades away before theirs. Fire is almost the only figure we employ. On this conviction, Dante acted; and made no scruple, either literary or religious, of availing himself of the only means by which it was at all feasible to rise to a competition with his venerated models, viz: by uniting the most striking of the infernal images of Paganism with those which his own Church afforded, as well as with some others gleaned from Islam. Did not this accumulation display his judgment? Is it not an instance of that common sense, which, according to Horace, is the source of all good writing? And if by it has been produced the most extensive and terrible allegory ever made of what cannot in reality be conceived by us, because it is infinite, (the eternal penalty in another life for wickedness in this) does he not approach nearest to the aim of all moralists? As long as the everlasting verities of

Christianity were respected, he knew that its parables might be varied at pleasure. Charon and Acheron are figures as admissable in religion as a causeway erected by sin and death, or the artillery of Satan, or the scoffings of Belial, and are nobler in poetry. Acheron was emblematical of eternal grief(1); Charon, of time (2): what law of Christianity forbids their being so still? Or are they mean or incredible, when compared with the *grim feature* upturning

His nostril wide into the murky air
Sagacious of his quarry?

or with the hissings, and bitter apples of Pandemonium? Would Milton have done worse, had he here followed Dante (whom he on other occasions often follows) and introduced into his hell some of those older, allegorical forms which possessed a double title to veneration, religious and literary; instead of endeavouring to make up for the deficiency of sensible imagery in his Creed by inventions of his own —— which were in substance quite as unreal as those ancient ones, but which no genius could have clothed with adequate dignity; because they had never been sanctified by an adoption into the formulary of any Church, nor by any, solemn, classical associations?

(1) Quia apud inferos nulla unquam sit lætitia. Genealogia Deor. Lib. III. Cap. 4.

(2) Charon, quem Servius devolvit in Cronon, tempus est. Id. Lib. I. Cap. 33.

If it be correct (as I think it generally is) to compare the various fine arts with each other, and judge them mutually by the analogy which certainly exists between them, then are the questions that I have just been putting doubly solved, and the decision of a Father in poetry is confirmed by a Father in painting. Michael Angelo, who scorned imitation, and far from copying seemed studious to avoid the antique, so that it is likely he even sometimes swerved consciously from the rules of taste in order to preserve his originality, not only took a part of the main plan of his famous picture, the Last Judgment, from Dante by a mixture of Pagan and Christian allegories (as I remarked before (1)), but, imitating him exactly in many of its minute items, put the lines we are now commenting into action; and Charon 'with eyes like living coals' is seen busy receiving the ghosts into his little bark, and beating with his oar those who attempt to lie or sit down in it (2). Neither of such inventive and learned men could discover, in their own capacious fancy, or in the records of their Religion, any contrivance so well calculated as this union of theological images, to awake the mind to meditation on the most terrible mysteries of Christianity: yet the one was composing a poem

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 23.

(2) *S'adagia* a sedere o in altra guisa (Boccaccio. Comento, vol. 1. p. 155)—not *linger* as Mr. Cary has it. The ghosts, far from lingering, were pressing to embark .... di trapassar si pronte.

strictly Christian, and the other a picture for a most celebrated Christian temple. I know not whether such authorities are decisive: but it will be pardonable to think so, until some poet, painter, philosopher, or preacher present us with a less imperfect emblem of a region of everlasting misery than any of which the world is yet possessed.

U. —— CXII.

This metaphor is from the Aeneid —

Quam multa in sylvis autumni frigore primo
Lapsa cadunt foglia (1) . . . .

but it has not so perfect an application there, as here: for Virgil designates only the *number* of the ghosts by it, but Dante both their *number* and the *gradual* manner in which they drop down into the boat; for autumnal leaves do not fall together, but by little and little —— ad una ad una —— according as they acquire full maturity, until at last each branch has rendered up all its robes to mother earth: so that I think M. Biagioli has a right to call this passage superiore di gran lunga a quella del Poeta Latino (2).

W. —— CXVII.

The original of this too belongs to Virgil, and forms the continuation of the verses cited in the last comment

(1) Lib. VI. v. 309.
(2) Comento. vol. I. p. 66.

. . . . aut ad terram gurgite ab alto
Quam multæ glomerantur aves, ubi frigidus annus
Trans pontum fugat et terris immittit apricis.

The common way of understanding com' augel per suo richiamo (1) (and in my opinion certainly the true one) is 'as birds to their decoy.' For augel is here a noun collective, as avis is in Aquino's translation of the same passage

. . . . . inque arctos sociæ velut illice cantu
Se laqueos adstringit avis, mala gurgitis atri
Progenies sic complet aquas:

and richiamo means not only what hawkers call technically a lure, but a bird-call, or anything used to decoy birds (2). Here then Dante alluded to a field sport, which was, and is still common in Italy: and if his phraseology must be allowed to be inharmonious and jejune in comparison with his sweet original (3), yet the idea suggested by him is more apposite as a metaphor, and as poetical in itself. It was bold and good taste to

(1) Come gli uccelletti si gittano al paretajo, o al boschetto invitati dal canto degli augelli di gabbia, o per altro suono. Biagioli, Venturi, ec, ec.

(2) Qualunque allettamento al quale si gittano per natura gli uccelli. Vocabolario §. 1.

(3) It may not however be fastidious criticism to remark, that *apricis* in the Latin introduces a confusion of images. The sorrowful condition of the ghosts was the matter to be impressed, and therefore any thing suggesting a pleasing notion was at best superfluous. The Homeric application of the similitude is liable to no such objection. In leaving out apricis, did not Dante borrow from Virgil with more discrimination, than Virgil from Homer?

substitute a usual Italian pastime, for a sight rather belonging to Greece or Egypt than to Italy, a flight of birds beyond sea: and the observation made in the preceding Article (of Dante's simile expressing not only the number, but the mode of embarcation of the souls) is still more applicable here. Nor do I apprehend that any one, who has ever witnessed the diversion to which I allude will deny that few things can bear more resemblance with each other than the picture intended to be given, of the spirits fluttering along the bank, or causeway, and at last dropping down *one by one* into the river, with the little birds, that, after chirping and flitting about for a while, are seen to dip *almost always one by one* into the decoy-grove.

Those who would translate it 'as a falcon to the lure (1)' deprive it of its best qualities, whether considered with reference to the purpose for which Dante employed it, or to the Latin of which it is clearly an imitation. A falcon gives no idea of the

(1) Mr. Cary, whose version is "as falcon at his call," cites Velutello as his authority; but he might have cited a far better one, Boccaccio (Comento. Vol. 1. p. 155). But Boccaccio was no fowler: nor Mr. Cary an Italian one, or he would have known that the common explanation is what I have given, and not as his note avers "as a bird that is enticed to the cage by the call of another". One bird inveigling another to the cage would be as liable, as a falconer with his hawk, to the objection of individualizing what was meant to be general. They would equally reduce the simile within inadequate dimensions. Had he even consulted his dictionary, he would have learned that neither paretajo nor boschetto means *cage* but 'the place where nets are placed to catch birds' — dove si distendono le reti per prendere uccelletti. Vocabolario.

crowds of souls; nor of quam *multæ* glomerantur aves. I might have remained unaware of the peculiar justness of the figure, as it is usually received, had I never been out fowling with Tuscans: but the very first time I was so, it was my irresistible conviction that Dante here alluded to their mode of decoying; and that nothing could better represent at once both the multiplicity and the movements of his airy personages. A small round bushy grove — Boschetto — on an easy eminence is preserved for this amusement, and (being smeared with bird-lime, and prepared with decoy-birds, and nets, and men artfully concealed, who keep sounding their bird-calls) any one who stands outside of the treacherous grove soon sees the poor, deceived, feathery family gather on the neighbouring trees and after hopping about from branch to branch with many chirps, begin to fly into the vocal ambush exactly *one after another* — una ad una — in a hurried, half-reluctant, and very remarkable manner. Prodigious flocks of them are sometimes thus caught; and, although there be varieties amongst them, yet one may well specify thrushes, because these are what are mostly taken; so that the grove itself is named 'a grove to catch *thrushes* (1).'

(1) 'Boschetto diciamo anche all' uccellare dove si pigliano i *tordi*.' Vocabolario. §.

X. —— CXXVI.

This self-sacrifice of the conscious culprits in order to be poetically fine must be allegorical of something morally true. Is it then morally true that bad men after death court the eternal castigation of their wickedness? So at least Dante held, upon many great authorities, but particularly Origen, who attributes even the devil's innability of salvation to want of *will* rather than of power (1). The types of future rewards and punishments are various in various ages and countries; and are better, or less calculated to affect the imagination. The grossest perhaps are the most impressive on gross minds: but those who have meditated on the human soul will require that the emblem of her retribution should partake of her immaterial nature; the more they spiritualize this, the more they will labour to make that also purely spiritual; and the higher the fancy is elevated, the less capable it becomes of furnishing sensible images of that soul, that Paradise, that Hell: so that at last we may have recourse to considering Paradise and Hell as qualities which the soul may acquire in perpetuity. When intimately connected with infinite joy, she will be her own Paradise —— with infinite woe, her own Hell. Our conceptions at least (for the mystery is inscrutible) can scarcely

(1) . . . . nolit magis quam non possit, dum scelerum rabies jam libido est et delectat. De Principiis. Lib. 1. Cap. VIII.

attain nearer the reality; because in no other mode can they be more abstracted from matter; and almost the only certainty we have is this, that as the soul is immaterial, so whatever is to affect her, when liberated from the flesh and every extraneous impediment, must be immaterial too. But whether there shall be a profusion of immaterial objects hereafter, or whether Providence shall continue that sublime parsimony, which we observe in the natural world, and, instead of a sinner and a hell, shall make (as I have conjectured) the sinner his own hell, we know not. Yet there can be nothing wrong in the conjecture; and it were to render the moral allegorized by Dante more striking: and to argue unavoidably, both that those who are deeply guilty will press on to their own punishment, and that that punishment will be everlasting. For if the soul 'on shuffling off this mortal coil' follows her bent with uncontrolled vehemence, and, having held a course of love and virtue even through the perils and temptations of an earthly banishment, springs up to that first principle of goodness and bliss for which she had long panted as for her original home, or as if she felt that she was a particle once torn from it; then the habitual indulger of hateful propensities must in a like manner rush with renovating ardour towards those terrible delusions in the pursuit of which he had been before restrained by the weight and feebleness of a corporeal texture. He must

continue in his wickedness, and habit must harden him in it every hour in spite of accumulating pain; vice growing older grows only more hideous and inflexible; and that guilt can never be expiated which never ceases to be aggravated.

Y. —— CXXIX.

Since this bank is the rendez-vous of the guilty, thou (cries Virgil) should'st feel no displeasure, but satisfaction at Charon's refusal to receive thee

Nulli fas casto sceleratum insistere limen (1).

Z. —— CXXXII.

The text may have been suggested by the Aeneid

. . . . . *gemit* ultima pulsu
Thraca pedum (2):

but was certainly taken from Dante by Milton

Earth felt the wound . . . . .
Earth trembled from her entrails . . . . (3).

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 563.

(2) Lib. XII. v. 334.

(3) Paradise Lost. IX. The chief beauty in these passages from our own bard, as well as in those from the Roman, and the Tuscan, consists in the *personification* of the earth. Therefore though Mr. Ginguené's (Hist. de l'Italie. vol. II. p. 39) la terre baignée des larmes des damnés exhale un vent impétueux may be a correct explication, it is no fair translation: a mere physical phenomenon being substituted for noble figurative language. Mr. Cary preserves the personification by borrowing a phrase from Dryden: "Groans the *sad* earth." See Trans. Aen. XII. 504.

COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE FOURTH.

A. —— 1.

At the close of the preceding Canto Dante had fallen down in a stupor; during which he is evidently supposed to have been conveyed across Acheron, and landed on the first Circle (1). The entire of this circle is exempt from pain; and is divided into two unequal portions. The first of these is the Angelical doctor's 'Hell-of-children' (Infernus puerorum; (and the second, his (Infernus sanctorum Patrum) 'Hell-of-the holy-fathers'; divisions, as is noticed in the margin, which answer to two circles (the first and ninth) of the Virgilian hell. While traversing the first division, Virgil makes many observations to his pupil, not about the crowds of children round them, who could scarcely merit any, but about the former and present inhabitants of the second division to which they

(1) The subterranean circus, Hell, deepens from a state of Elysian tranquillity to one of infinite suffering —— the vestibule being an exception, partly to inflict an unnatural penalty on a despicable crime, and partly to imitate Origen and Virgil, as was said before. Hell, Comment, Canto. III. p. 156, 173, and 179.

are approaching; and within which they at last step. There they find a numerous assemblage of the heroes and heroines of Antiquity, whom they pass in review from the top of a luminous hill to which they retire in company with four other eminent bards: after which, these four take leave of Dante and Virgil who continue their journey; and the Canto closes. This Circle is computed to be 14 miles below the Vestibule, and to present a circular walk of 17 ½ miles broad. In its middle yawns the monstrous aperture of the abyss 245 miles wide. So going round it, Dante has on one hand a precipice 14 miles high, and on the other that fearful gulf into which the eye cannot pierce, 'its murky clouds so boil and hiss (1).'

Since I have not hesitated to advance that Dante was still more distinguished as a man of science, a politician, and a theologian, than as a poet (2);

(1) The *extreme* width of the vestibule was 315 miles (Hell, Comment, Canto III. p. 161): the *extreme* of this circle is 280: remain 35, but (as a line of diameter drawn from one extremity to another of a circular body perforated in the centre must cross the body twice, once before the perforation and again after) that leaves only its moiety 17 and a half for the *net* width. The *extreme* of this Circle is 280; the *extreme* of the second 245: remain 35, or 17 and a half, as before. But in a sketch the walk of the Vestibule must be narrowed by whatever breadth is allowed to Acheron; which flows round the orifice leading to the first Circle and then takes a subterranean, invisible course: with this exception, the Vestibule and the first Circle are of similar dimensions. See Manetti —— Giambullari —— Velutello. Keeping a Roman Amphitheatre in one's mind, we have now stept down a tier.

(2) Bonus enim poeta (says Ascensius of Virgil) non tam delectare — quod tamen plurimum facit — quam prodesse pretendit. Com. in Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 657.

since I am of opinion that he had for one of his principal aims (perhaps his paramount one) not only to imitate Homer and Virgil, by celebrating the creed of his own country, as they did that of their's, but to expound it with unrivalled accuracy; and since therefore, according to a fundamental rule of good taste, all poetical ornaments should, far from frustrating that main aim, be strictly subservient to it, and indeed be nothing more than the honey to recommend the draught; —— we are arrived at a passage, where, to do justice to him as a poet, it is requisite to see whether he has erred as a Roman Catholic theologian: and this appears to me the more necessary, not only because it has been neglected by former commentators, but because even a judicious admirer of the Divine Comedy has, in this instance, attempted to rifle it of one of its surest titles to immortality —— that of handing down a correct notion of the spiritual tenets of one of the most lasting and widely-spread forms of worship (to say nothing of its holiness) which mankind ever professed (1). If Homer and Virgil still live, they owe it in great measure to their faithful delineation of the religious doctrines of Antiquity: hereafter Dante may be prized on a

(1) Les punitions du Dante sont pour la plus part proportionnées aux crimes, et font honneur à son jugement et à son esprit de justice. Ce n'est qu'avec répugnance et à contre cœur qu'il damne les hommes célèbres, et il sauve autant qu'il peut sans trop heurter les dogmes de son Eglise et quelquefois même en les heurtant. Merian, Mem. de l'Acad. de Berlin. 1784.

like account with even better reason; and no doubt but (indulging occasionally like other mighty spirits in the prescience of his immortality of fame) he felt, that the sacred poem, to which, in his own words, 'both heaven and earth contributed (1),' would be afterwards resorted to for theological information by curious men not only not his co-religionists, but perhaps of creeds the most widely different, in distant lands and ages. Yet this ought never to be the case, and he were no longer an authority, if his orthodoxy were questionable on any one point. The mode in which he disposes of the Pagan heroes in this Canto, and of some others in Purgatory and Paradise is the ground of much misplaced sarcasm against his Church, and of encomium equally misplaced upon him; as if the vigour of his fancy corrected the narrowness of his religion. But it is an absolution he cannot receive: it is strictly as the poet of Catholicism that he stands upon his deliverance, and to discredit his orthodoxy is to shake the pillars of his poetic temple. It is indeed an axiom of the Roman Church that belief in the Messiah is, and always has been, necessary to salvation. This is a general position; as it is likewise one, that "neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God (2)." And

(1) Parad. Canto xxv.
(2) I. Cor. 6. 10.

it is certain they shall not, as long as they continue thieves or extortioners; for nothing impure shall ever enter there: but who can tell that another has expired thief or exortioner? We, who can only judge by appearances, may be easily deceived. It is the same with regard to faith. We can pry little into another's mind at any time, even while that mind has the will and the power of words to assist us: but before it separates from the body communication between it and us has entirely ceased — for in even the suddenest death the loss of articulation precedes the departure of the soul; and what may be felt, or learned during that fluttering paroxysm, when life has retired from its outworks, the senses, to the heart, which is its citadel, or what change may be then undergone by the spirit, or what invisible agents may be in attendance, we shall never be able to determine, until fallen into a similar condition ourselves; and then we shall be quite as uncommunicative to those we leave behind, as our precursors were to us. But not only for this reason the ultimate fate of an individual is not to be pronounced; but that general axiom of theology bears itself a theological exception named by the schools *invincible ignorance:* and who has lived or died in a state of invincible ignorance is avowed to be another secret inscrutable to us (1). This

(1) What invincible ignorance is, the Church of Dante does not pretend to define; but she permits our reasoning thus: — Every one

much however we know from the Apostle, that "the wisdom of the wise" is folly (1): and from the strictest rules of logic, that in comparison with a Being infinitely wise our philosophers are as ignorant as our ideots, since the capacities of both are finite. Here then the axiom of exclusion is again inapplicable to individuals: and we remain in the dark, except when aided by a miraculous interposition of heaven; to which Catholics pretend only in those cases where their Church has decreed canonization, and in those others recorded in the Bible, and which all Christians equally believe. But understand the necessity of a belief in Jesus ever so literally, I repeat that it is not

ignorant of the true faith is so either *vincibly*, or *invincibly*. If *vincibly*, he can conquer it; so if he does not, he is wilfully ignorant: but such wilfulness is guilt; and the wilfulness precedes the ignorance, so that something criminal, and not mere ignorance, is, as it ought to be, the real cause of his diaster, should he expire deficient in the knowlege necessary to salvation. If *invincibly* ignorant, he is involuntarily so; and the converse of the proposition seems equally correct, that *all involuntary ignorance is invincible*. Then no man involuntarily ignorant of the true faith will ever be called to account for that ignorance: and whatever be his circumstances, whether born in Christendom, or among Heathens, whether totally uncivilized, or decorated with all the folly of the wise (mis-named by us learning), if he be not wilful in his ignorance then is he invincibly ignorant and in the opinion of the Church innocently: and, if his life be in other respects as innocent, his eternal portion will be with the pure of heart, in spite of appearances which easily deceive us. But, in fine, whose ignorance is or ever was, vincible, or invincible, voluntary, or involuntary, may have been enquired by particular divines on their own authority, but it is certain that the dogmas of Catholicism most prudently and charitably abstain from it.

(1) I. Cor. I. 19-20.

decided who has been blest with that belief, or who has not. There is no death but supposes a space between it and full life: and that space, however imaginably brief, is less evanescent in comparison with all the ages since the creation, than these are with eternity. No instant of time but may be compared with the longest human life: but neither that instant, nor that lengthened life, can bear the least comparison with eternity; so it is mathematically correct to affirm, that in the balance with eternal existence all portions of time, the greatest, or most minute, are absolutely and equally insignificant. The instant therefore which is so transient in our perception, may in that of the Divinity be of neither more nor less duration than the most protracted human life: so if *this life* can merit an eternity of bliss, *that instant* may be just as capable of meriting it. Truly speaking then (because speaking with reference to the Fountain of truth) the space supposable by us in even cases of suddenest mortality, between utter dissolution and full life, is not comparatively short; and things may take place during it of which we blind mortals can attain no knowledge; but which may secure the individual a crown of infinite joy quite as possibly as the whole sum of his thoughts, words, and deeds, during the pittance of years he had been seen to live. Neither the Catholic doctors, nor, I believe, any power on earth, pretend to be acquainted with what may

then take place in favour of even the worst of sinners or the most strenuous of disbelievers: so, if to suppose his condemnation is sometimes allowable, not as matter of absolute assertion, but of example, to suppose his salvation is at least equally to be permitted, as an example of another kind more in unison with the principles of Christian charity (1). Amidst the murkiness of our intellect this much can be discerned clearly, that the supreme Being must be infinitely merciful and just: we may be deceived in a thousand ways in our estimations, but his attributes cannot fail. Whatever takes place is just and merciful; and if it sometimes seems otherwise unto us, the defect is in our comprehension. On the one hand then, to prescribe any bounds to the Creator's mercy is to be guilty of a heinous enormity: and on the other, it is certain that divine justice will reward with the light and grace necessary to Salvation every man not totally unworthy of them. But this unworthiness can be nothing but the lurking of something vicious, although perhaps entirely imperceptible to us. To say the want of belief causes woe, is then to adduce a secondary cause: for the primary one is vice; vice is the cause of that want of belief; and the woe you commiserate is nothing

(1) E salve, salve, O spirto fortunato,
Salve sorella del bel numer una
Cui rimesso è dal Ciel ogni peccato.
Monti. Bassvilliana, Canto 1.

more than the ruin consequent on vice. The virtuous man on the contrary (whatever be appearances that blind us) shall somehow or other, and somewhere or other, learn to know and believe whatever is requisite to make him happy: for eternal happiness follows virtue as necessarily as misery does guilt. Here we are drawn to a point in which orthodox members of almost every creed agree; and, in spite of scholastic disputes and mutual acrimony, this fundamental principle is found to be common to them all, that vice alone is the origin of misery, and virtue of bliss; and that the virtuous shall be for ever happy, and the wicked miserable. Here must the theologians of various persuasions, however apparently at variance in their dogmas, stand together, if forced back from discursive reasonings to the source of them. How often would this be the kind end of discussions, if antagonists had patience to understand each other! But too many are more obstinate, than desirous of teaching or of being taught: some will not soften their expressions, although it would detract nothing from their meaning; and some will not candidly examine the real meaning of those exaggerated expressions. Thus *words* become the cause of strife; while the difference as to *things* is perhaps little or nothing. From what I have said it follows, that the dogmas of Dante's church did not prescribe any order for the placing of his personages either in Paradise, or in Hell; but equally prohibited his

representing them in either, as matter of fact (1); and as one of fancy, left him at liberty. That such is the orthodox theory of his Church, suffices for Dante: nor is it necessary for his commentator to endeavour to reconcile that benevolent doctrine (which, without any Procrustean aids, may be adapted universally, and leaves every individual's fate, where it should be, in his Maker's hand) with either the language of the vulgar, or the intemperance of some of the learned; it is for themselves to do that (2). The axiom therefore of exclusive

(1) The story of S. Gregory and Trajan is told variously (Baronius ad ann. 604 — N. Aless. Vita S. Greg. Lib. 2. cap. 44.); but all allow that he represented that Pagan Emperor in Paradise, and that the assertion was condemned '*not because it was impossible for the Prince to be there, but because it was impossible for the Pontiff to know whether he was so, or not, without a direct revelation from above*—to which his Holiness pretended not:' this as to Paradise. As to Hell: 'when, not many years ago, the holy preacher Lionardo da Porto Maurizio was under process of Canonization, the advocate of the devil (such is the quaint title of one of the Canonical lawers — l'avvocato del diavolo) stopped all proceedings by accusing the candidate of the rash judgment of having pronounced the damnation of his neighbour. A most hardened and sacrilegious murderer (he had slain a priest at the altar with circumstances of marvellous atrocity and the premeditation of many months) had been just turned off from the gallows with an atheistical cry of vengeance in his mouth, when Lionardo, getting up to preach to the already shocked multitude, exclaimed that the miserable impenitent was dropping into hell. The accusation was held good by the ecclesiastical court, *because it was impossible to know what change might have been wrought in the culprit in the interval between the tightening of the rope and the utter departure of his soul, without a direct revelation from above, the onus probandi of which lay with the advocates for canonization.*' Can. Lett. p. 2.

(2) No religion can be absolved from persecuting bigotry if held responsible for the sentiments of its members however illustrious, or even of large assemblies of such. Hume, Hist. Vol. 8. p. 267. Ano-

salvation, when theologically considered and reduced to its accurate meaning, does not in the least interfere with the personages of the Divine Comedy; and, however terrible to the inattentive hearer, and however often abused by the ambitious and malignant, is, in itself, a harmless, abstract, general rule with so many tacit exceptions of which we cannot judge, that, in spite of all the ingenuity of speculation, we cannot employ it to condemn a single human being without great absurdity as well as guilt (1). Church dogmas then did they meddle with the affair at all, would not have regulated Dante's awards, but would have prohibited his making any on ground so deceptious as appearances: if a poet were not permitted to do so, be-

1625. — Dante indeed pays small attention to individual Doctors, but his Muse records every one of those paramount tenets universally taught by the Roman Catholics.

(1) Even the Council of Trent notwithstanding the violence of its debates, and the religious virulence that then raged every-where, was obliged, when it came to propound an actual decree, to lessen its asperity in order to preserve its orthodoxy; and the consequence was, that it left the matter of exclusive salvation as undecided as it had found it. For as to the universal acclamation of "anathema to all heretics ancient and modern," it was indeed a sound full of fury and too capable of being converted at that unhappy season to direful purposes; but, however badly timed or wickedly intended by wicked inviduals, it was in truth nothing more than a repetition of the theological maxim we have been discussing. Being likely to be most uncharitably explained, it was most uncharitable to repeat it gratuitously: but if explained with the mildness of an impartial looker on and with reference not to angry declaimers, but the letter of the Catholic recorded Articles of faith, it would have never authorized the condemnation of one single individual alive or dead, as I hope I have proved. Sarpi, Storia del Con. Trid. l. 8. p. 415.

cause it is only from them he can cull examples, which he gives not as serious decisions, but as specious reveries. The only rule that bound him was to abstain from supposing any thing *impossible* to be true; and however improbable it be that his Pagans etc. are as he has placed them, it is a theological verity that they *possibly* may be so. This being the case, the question is no longer one of Divinity, but of poetical justice: it is not whether he observed an orthodox rule (for I have shown he had none, except with regard to a few canonized saints, and the still fewer Biblical characters), but whether he applied morally the licence conceded to his fancy for a very moral purpose? This M. Merian has partly answered by saying, 'his punishments are *in general* proportioned to his crimes:' but, since there is little about punishments in this Canto, does he present us with rewards proportioned to merits (1)?

To reward a good action by realizing the hopes that induced the actor to perform it is a first principle of equity among men. The nature and proceedings of eternal justice lie far beyond our comprehension: but, in our ignorance of them, we may safely apply to the tribunal of a future world the rules which are acknowledged to be just in this. Now a Christian is taught to look forward to a Paradise of ineffable bliss; while the Pagans

(1) Præmia meritis sunt mensuranda. Monarchia, Lib. 2. p. 32.

in general appear to have been contented with their subterranean Elysium. I say *in general*, because a few of them professed brighter hopes; and *appear*, because (I repeat it once more) we can only descry appearances, and not the truth; and a poet is licensed to decide on appearances. He may limit the Christian Paradise to those who *seem* to have participated a Christian's hopes; and place in Elysium those who *seem* to have expected it as their eternal recompense. He can vouch for nothing certainly: he cannot tell how any of those individuals died; nor whether the principle that is equitable here is so hereafter, but by placing the worthy followers of Jesus in Paradise, and the virtuous Heathens in that Elysian Limbo on which their own theologians dwelt with rapture (and to which Dante could not have consigned them without high veneration, since his own Church-men taught that it had been long hallowed by the presence of the Fathers of Christianity, and, at last, by that of Christ himself) is exemplified one great moral lesson, — that which teaches our heart and fancy to expand each other mutually, for that in some proportion with their expansion shall be their reward. But it is well known, some of the Pagans openly professed sublimer expectations than those that were then usual; it was therefore exemplary to represent some of them as participating the glories of Christianity, and judicious

not to select Cicero (1); lest the reader should mistake that for exception, which was intended as illustration; and for a serious decision of what actually *is* a given mortal's lot in futurity, that which was meant as a fanciful supposition of what it possibly *may be;* in short lest he should receive as a particular sentence, that which was imagined as a general example, or allegory; — and those who find allegories every-where throughout the Divine Comedy, ought not to have been silent as to this one. Ought not then the academical sentence to have rather run thus: — 'Dante is not only equitable in proportioning punishments to crimes and rewards to merits, but is at the same time so scrupulously exact in conforming to the dogmas of his Church, that, were all the tomes of Catholicism lost, posterity would still have a correct idea of its tenets from this poem?'

B. — VII.

Some say Dante is to be suppposed to have been borne over by an Angel during sleep: but certainly the words of Virgil to Charon rather imply that they came over in his boat (as Aeneas had done before); for if they were to be transported not by him, but by an Angel, to what purpose their altercation? —

(1) . . . Sic habeto, certum esse in *cælo* ac definitum locum ubi beati ævo *sempiterno* fruantur. Somnum Scip. How many Christians have excelled this definition of a Christian Paradise?

C. —— xxv.

Boccaccio says very correctly—— 'the first Circle borders the abyss (1).' It is then no part of that abyss, that pit, that blind domain, (cieco mondo) that glen, that mortal den. These are all Synonimes for Tartarus, or Hell-of-the-damned, with which this first Circle has nothing whatever in common. In the Aeneid Elysium is not more strikingly separated from Tartarus, than in this poem. Virgil here turns pale with pity while looking down into it, as Aeneas while looking towards it (respicit Aeneas): but the latter, hurrying on, leaves it upon his left hand (sub rupe sinistra (2)); and the former descends into it in the next Canto.

D. —— xxx.

This first division of this first Circle is the Hell or Limbo-of-Children (Infernus puerorum) in the language of Dante's Church (3), and exactly corresponds to the first circle of the Virgilian hell:

Continuò auditæ voces, vagitus et ingens,
Infantumque animæ flentes in limine primo,
Quos dulcis vitæ exsortes et ab ubere raptos
Abstulit atra dies, et funere mersit acerbo:
Nec vero hæ sine sorte datæ, sine judice, sedes (4).

(1) Il primo cerchio, o Limbo, attornia l'abisso, cioè il profondo Inferno. Comento, vol. I. p. 173.
(2) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 548.
(3) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 139.
(4) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 426.

If we allow Virgil in this instance a similar merit with that which Dante incontestibly possesses (a faithful transmission of the creed of his time), it is impossible not to be struck with the resemblance of their opinions. And, when we recollect that these opinions have survived the subversion of such a variety of others, and lasted so many ages, one is almost inclined to suspect, that although it appear to be one of the subjects most hopelessly involved in the labyrinth of vain speculation, yet some clue, of which we are not aware, is afforded to it by a feeling of human nature. Why should the souls of babies be excluded from Paradise? or, what is stranger, be subjected to penalty? and that, not by an arbitrary sentence, but, as the Roman poet pointedly urges, by a regular righteous judgment — nec sine sorte, nec sine judice? To mortal eyes they seemed perfectly innocent. Catholics urge the doctrine of Original sin; so there is no accusing them of inconsistency. But had the Ancients some similar doctrine? Or did they consign Children to punishment for errors supposed to have been perpetrated in some former state of existence? I, at last, am unprepared to answer.

With reference to the mere merits of the writers, one may be inclined to put on a par the verses cited from the Aeneid and the two tiercets we are commenting; or rather to allow some superiority to Virgil on the score of melody. But, intrinsically

valued, the Italian passage is more pleasing; because it breathes a more benevolent theology, and is more easily reconcileable to vulgar notions of equity. The 'weeping' (flentes) and 'piercing cries' (vagitus et ingens) of the Latin become softened down by the modern into 'no tears, but a world of sighs.' Praise for this however is due not to the poet, but to his Church; and he might have been still kinder without being less orthodox (1). Entirely similar on this point is the belief of most Mahometans, for they hold that "he who dies an infant is neither rewarded nor punished (2)." Dante however, in order to distinguish clearly the two divisions of this first Circle, used to a certain degree the latitude which is allowed by his Church; and keeping a kind of middle course, between the mild tenets that are most favoured by it, and the stern ones of Paganism, he made his Hell-of-Children

(1) When the matter came to be revised by the Council of Trent, it was ascertained to have been always held by Catholics that the Limbo-of-children was a place free from pain; but, as to the quantity of enjoyment, the Dominicans and the Franciscans (as was usual with those friars) were at variance. The former described it as *subterranean*, like Aquinas and Dante: the latter as an airy, lightsome region *above ground*, with a variety of curious pastimes and often visited by consoling angels and saints. Only one Doctor (known by the ridiculous nickname of 'babe-teazer') was discovered to have considered it a state of pain — a sentiment which narrowly escaped an anathema by the contrary being made an Article of faith. From propounding an actual decree however the Council refrained, in courtesy, upon the Bishops coming to an understanding, that the doctrine taught in all their churches without exception should be that the Limbo-of-children was exempt from pain. Sarpi. Storia del Con. Trid. l. 8. p. 165.

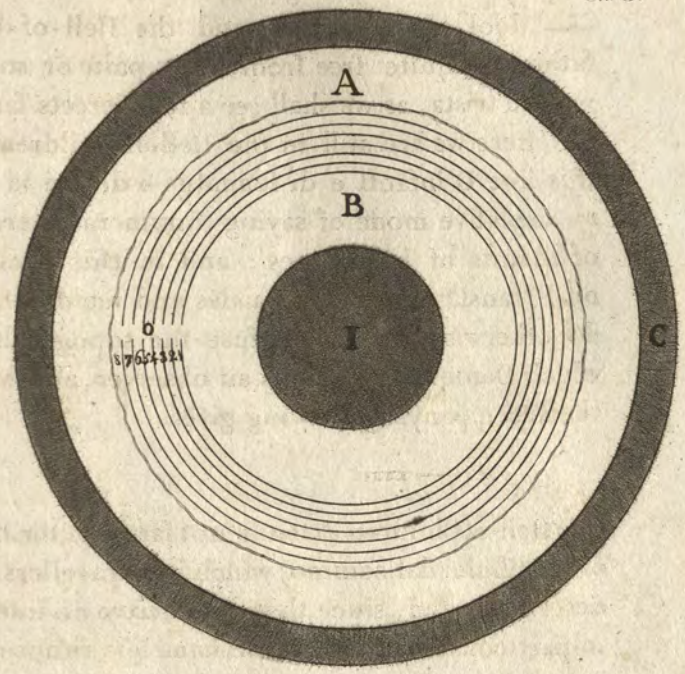
(2) Sale. Sect. VIII. p. 219.

display something of gentle sorrow without pain — duol senza martiri; and the Hell-of-holy-fathers be quite free from either pain or sorrow — nè trista, as we shall see a few tiercets farther on. Here we are still in the Hell-of-Children; so this liné D'infanti e di femmine e di viri is only an expletive mode of saying innumerable crowds of infants of both sexes: and in this persuasion I translate it 'babies males and maids (1).' To do otherwise would confuse the topography of which Dante is so curious an observer, and which the accompanying drawing gives.

E. — xxxii.

The Hell-of Children extends 'not far from the bank' or vestibule (dal sommo) which our travellers had descended: and, since they could have no interest to particularise any of those nameless innocents, it is evident they must be drawing very close to the second division, or at least in full sight of it, when they begin to think it worth while to 'scan the shades' — Che spiriti son questi? To whom

(1) Mr. Cary by translating "*men*, *women*, and infants," and indeed by his whole version, confounds these two divisions which are easily traced in the text. The first is this; the second begins to be seen at vidi un fuoco ec. v. 68. He seems to have been totally unaware of the existence of any such divisions, and therefore mixed them together past distinguishing. But in truth they form two rings or circlets into which this first Circle is divided all round — per tutta la estensione (all the parts of Dante's Hell being thus circular, as Lombardi justly observes), and are separated regularly by a stream and seven walls. v. 107.



Bird's eye view of the first Circle of Hell.

A. Its first division, or Hell-of-Children.

B. Its second, or Hell-of-holy-Fathers, or Elysium.

1 } Seven walls.
2
3
4
5
6
7

C. Vestibule of Hell.

I. Tartarus.

8 Stream.

0 Seven gates.

these are supposed to be limited now, we shall shortly see: but first learn from the recapitulation of many others said to have been once dwelling there, that this second division is (as I all along affirmed) St. Thomas Aquinas' hell-of-holy-fathers, called by other Catholics 'Limbo,' and by others 'Abraham's bosom.' This proximity of 'Abraham's bosom' to the 'hell-of-the-damned' (it is an observation of Boccaccio) agrees perfectly with S. Luke's parable of the rich man lifting up his eyes, being in torments, and yet being able to descry Abraham with Lazarus in his bosom (1).

F. —— XLII.

All the guiltless men that preceded Christianity having been once here dwelling together, it follows that it is Abraham's bosom, or the Hell which had been inhabited by the Patriarchs, and that, whatever descriptions Dante found his Church had ever made of such a place, might be made of it still, except there were some ecclesiastical decision to the contrary. But no such hazardous decision exists. It is indeed so far from being required by any Catholic dogma, that I find the Catholic expounders of the Psalms include in one group all those who, without being Christians, led virtuous lives. All such (without pronouncing who be such (2))

(1) Comento. p. 13. —and Gospel xvi. 23.

(2) I have already stated at more than sufficient length that an orthodox Divine can not judge on appearance, or apply his abstract principles to individuals, though a poet may. p. 223.

being enumerated among those to whom the Lord has *not imputed* sin, are declared *blessed:* for though original sin or want of baptism exclude them from Paradise, it may not so from the bliss of Limbo or Hell-of-the-holy-fathers (1). To *this* David evidently alluded (and not to the ineffable bliss of Paradise) as the region in which he hoped to wait for the Messiah: and of it Dante himself spoke, when, paraphrasing the xxxii Psalm, he divided its *two* first verses into *three* tiercets; and, with theological acumen defining in each tiercet a particular class of the blessed, made the third assert 'and blessed shall *all those* likewise be, unto whom God and the Angels of heaven shall impute no sin (2).' He might therefore have argued thus: All to whom sin is not *imputed;* are blessed; but original sin is not *imputed;* then one may be in original sin and yet be blessed: But none in original sin shall enter Paradise; then one may be blessed without ever entering Paradise: But the Church furnishes no other region but the hell-of-

(1) 'The Royal Prophet' (it is a Catholic comment I quote, Annofaz. ai Salmi di Dante. p. 38.) 'specifies three classes of the blessed: Firstly, those *in whose spirit is no guile* — secondly, repentant sinners *whose transgressions are forgiven* — thirdly those guilty of no *imputed* sin, that is of no sin but original sin, which, not being voluntary, is *not imputed* to man, *he unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.*' Psalms. XXXII. v. 1—2.

(2) E quei *tutti* beati ancor saranno
Ai quali Dio e gli Angeli del cielo
Alcun peccato non imputeranno.
I Sette Salmi di D. A. p. 32.

the-holy-fathers, wherein the idea of separation from Paradise can be united with that of bliss; ergo that region is one of bliss, and it contains those Pagans whom I suppose to have been great and virtuous characters, yet to have died in original sin for want of baptism.

G. —— LXV.

Dante (as his few words reveal) had his mind full of contending sentiments —— sorrow that the honored spirits of Antiquity should be shut out from the superior bliss of Paradise, and the more so because, not being as yet within the second division, he does not exactly know what their actual portion of bliss is; terror on thinking on the line which he had seen over hell's gateway, 'Leave ye that enter every hope behind;' and satisfation from the reflection, that this line is contradicted by the fact of Christ having descended as far as this very circle and *borne away from it* many that were here *hoping* for his arrival. All this is implied by his asking whether it be indeed true that none ever left this region? Boccaccio morevoer suggests, that he might have meant to infer the possibility of its not being to any an eternal doom (since it was not so to those Patriarchs), and to hint obscurely that also his master Virgil might perhaps hope one day to get out. If however this question is to be understood, it is followed by no answer; and the matter is mildly

consigned back to its pristine darkness. Had our poet hazarded any reply, it would surely have been the same burst of indignation which we shall find him, on another almost similar occasion, direct against the presumption of seeking to scrutinize matters that lie totally beyond human comprehension:

> And who is he who thus presumes to scan
> A thousand miles beyond his stool
> With sight no longer than a span?(1),

But as to the demand about Christ's descent, Virgil answers it at great length; marking the epoch at which it occurred by referring to that of his own death. — This is supposed to have taken place about half a century before the Christian era (2). Whatever had been Dante's reason for putting his question in so covert a shape, (whether delicacy towards his master, or in order to avoid pronouncing in any part of hell the hallowed name of Jesus) his master replies with the frankness in which a noble mind delights, that the Gospel story is most correct, and runs over the roll of the Jewish Sages, as if to show they had become well known to him. Dante not content with inculcating this doctrine here by mouth of his duke, repeats it in his own person in his Creed — 'then the Saviour descended

(1) Parad. Canto xix.

(2) This the second time the date of Virgil's career is refered to; yet exact Chronologists disagree about it. Hell, Comment, Canto i. p. 38.

to liberate the ancient Fathers (1). ' One of these —Moses — had been already commemorated by Virgil under the name of Musæus; at least it has been pretended so (2).

Musæum ante omnes medium nam plurima turba
Hunc habet atque humeris extantem suscipit altis (3).

H. —— LXIX.

At last we enter the second division; and the verses that introduce us are impressive, although not so sonorous as those of which they are a manifest imitation:

Largior hic campos æther et lumine vestit
Purpureo (4) . . . . .

Beautiful in itself it surely is, and great proof of the learning and correct taste of Dante, that he was able to produce so many points of similitude between two systems apparently so discordant as the Christian and the Pagan, and, uniting much of the imagery of both, make no attaint upon either: by which happy selection an ancient poet and theologian (without any of that discrepancy which nothing less than prodigious erudition and genius could have avoided) is represented as conducting a modern one through that future world, which many imagine was depicted formerly in a

(1) . . . discese per cavar gli antichi Padri. Credo. p. 139.
(2) Nisi, ut arbitrantur aliqui, Musæus et Moyses unum et idem sint. Genealogia Deor. Lib. XIV. Cap. VIII.
(3) Aeneid. l. VI. v. 667.
(4) Id. Id. Id. 637.

very different manner from what it is at present, and recording with admirable fidelity the dogmas of that modern's religion, without swerving from his own; —— so that he not only does not confuse our ideas of Antiquity, but rather throws new light on the subject. Let us moreover recollect that this monument of multifarious science was raised in the first years of the fourteenth Century, and then turn to our own history —— yet without a blush, for the rest of Europe lay plunged in an equal barbarism.

This then is the Virgilian Elysium, whose description is too long to insert here entirely: but who, on re-perusing those melodious Latin strains, will regret, that the Italian copy has left out the specification of some of its details, such as the chariots, lances, and coursers? If the rest of the picture enraptures the fancy, are not those figures misplaced that recall it back to daily misery by alluding to such mere earthly occupations? This is that Abraham's bosom where Lazarus was comforted. This is that tranquil Limbo called 'of-the-holy-fathers' by Catholics ——

Hic genus antiquum .... pulcherrima proles
Magnanimi heroes, nati melioribus annis (1). ——

and by many of their Divines described in glowing colours, as blest with celestial visitations and the inexhaustible study of philosophy and virtue. This

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v: 648.

is that blissful region of hell to which even the Divinity himself descended without repugnance, (according to the Angelical doctor) but not beyond it (1). This in fine is that al Arâf of the Mahometans, which contains "many Patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, and Angels in the form of men (2)." I know the eternal nature of the Virgilian Elysium has been doubted: and as for the al Arâf, it is certainly not eternal, although of indefinite duration. But such obscurity is only a new instance of their resemblance to this Catholic Hell-of-the-holy-fathers: for on the one hand, I find its eternity not declared in any positive statute; and on the other, it is made an article of faith that it was not eternal to all its occupants, viz: to those liberated Patriarchs. The Aeneid does not inform us absolutely whether Elysium was eternal or not. Tartarus, it tells us, was eternal (eternumque sedebit infelix): but if that state of punishment was eternal, some one of reward must have been so too. Then, if Elysium was not eternal it dwindles into a mildest kind of Purgatory; and not only for a few deified personages, but for all virtuous men there must have been some higher bliss in reserve. That many Pagans held this latter opinion, and amongst them Cicero and Virgil himself, I have already said (3);

(1) Solum ad locum Inferni in quo justi detinebantur. D. T. Aquini, Sen. 1. dist. 22. quæst. 2. art. 1.

(2) Sale Sect. IV. p. 125. — Koran, Chap. VII.

(3) Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 59 — 11. p. 88.

but I doubt of its being a universal doctrine of Pagan theologians, because I do not find it asserted in the Aeneid. It would certainly be implied there, if any of its verses unequivocally limited the duration of Elysium to a thousand years: for then there must have been some eternal Paradise to counter-poise that eternal Tartarus; some final home for the auraï simplicis ignem as soon as its earthly stains were purged away, whether by punishments in the world of shades, or by returning to this one, in order to redeem the errors of its former life by living better. But to punish it when become stainless by sending it back to where its stains had been contracted, and exile it then from that blissful Elysium into this wretched existence, would be unjust and contradictory. The Pagan belief therefore as to Paradise, would not be so remote from our own, if it could be positively ascertained that it was an article of the Pagan faith that Elysium was not eternal. But to me that is not clear; and even the following passage may be construed without any such admission:

Quisque suos patimur manes: exinde per amplum
Mittimur Elysium et *pauci* læta arva *tenemus*;
Donec longa dies, perfecto temporis orbe,
Concretam exemit labem, purumque reliquit
Ethereum sensum atque auraï simplicis ignem.
Has omnes, ubi mille rotam volvêre per annos,
Lætheum ad flumen Deus evocat (1).

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 743.

There is something dubious in the syntax, as well as in the sentiment; for donec may refer either to pauci, or to tenemus; and has omnes allude either to the inhabitants of Elysium, or to those of the adjacent purgatorial hell. But two things are evident: Firstly, that Virgil, contrary to his practise, is obscure here, and secondly, that there is no deciding from the passage as to whether Elysium was to be an eternal abode for its denizens, or whether they were at last to obtain their apotheosis and become enumerated among those few (such as Romulus) whom the Pagan Creed (in this far more parsimonious than the Roman Catholic one) taught, beyond all doubt, to be saints, not in Elysium, but in a celestial home, whether under the title of Dei, or Semidei (1). Whatever was Virgil's private opinion, he probably chose to avoid precision on a matter not expressly defined by the established religion of his Country. Dante, in a situation not dissimilar, followed his example; and had too good taste to prefer the decisive inferences of church-men, to the mild, liberal, noble indecision of the Church itself.

I. —— XC.

The line

Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti (2)

(1) Ollos quos endo cælo merita vocaverint. De Legibus. Lib. II. Cap. 8.

(2) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 662.

was certainly to be understood as including Homer; but was not that generic eulogy rather meagre in the mouth of a man who had drawn on him so lavishly as Virgil? And who thus gave Macrobius a just occasion to affirm that the Aeneid was nothing but a mirror reflecting the Iliad and Odyssey (1). Dante is more grateful to his illustrious predecessors (2). His giving the poetic Sovereignity to Homer is only a confirmation of general opinion; nor do I believe that there will be any objection started to the rank assigned to Horace, or Ovid: but the one which Lucan is here made to occupy has been subjected to bitter criticism.

Whatever be the decision as to the epic superiority of the Pharsalia, its author was dear to Dante as the panegyrist of liberty; and no doubt but in his eyes this moral destination would have enhanced the value of even inferior poetry. But whatever

(1) Omne opus Virgilianum velut de quodam Homerici Operis speculo formatum est. Saturnalia. Lib. v. Cap. 2.

(2) That he should award Poets precedence above all the Heroes, and Philosophers that are to appear, may be condemned: but be it recollected — firstly, that it is unjust to argue from an abuse; and secondly that heavenly poetry, which has been so abused by its minor followers, was always in its chiefs, Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Milton, etc, an incentive to virtue; and thirdly, that it is an historical fact that they were Poets who shed the earliest light of knowledge throughout the world — as is still testified by those oldest of books, the Bible, and the Iliad and Odyssey: for, in the language of Strabo, '*it is impossible to be a good poet without being first a good man*' —ἂκ οἷόν τε ἀγαθὸν γενεσθαι ποιητὴν, μὴ πρότερον γεννηθέντα ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν. Lib. 1. "Nor are any of the nobler poets false to this cause" — says my Lord Shaftesbury with great truth. Characteristics, Vol. 1. p. 121.

be the degree assigned on the critical scale to the poetry Lucan left behind, he was himself a poet of the very first order, a sovereign genius, a most sublime enthusiast, whose blemishes are all deducible from a defect too easily removed, that of being very young, a writer whom some have not scrupled to prefer to Virgil (1), and who would possibly have really surpassed Virgil, had he been allowed time to chasten the brilliancy of his fancy. His daring genius and incredible assiduity (for, although cut off scarce in his twenty-seventh year he left above ten literary works), the irony of his dedication to Nero, and the intrepidity which, in such a court of slaves and under such a ferocious tyrant, engaged him to pronounce a panegyric upon freedom (the cause to which he at last made the libation of his blood), the memory of his Uncle, and the manner of both their murders,—one a Sage bleeding to death amid his secretaries, the other a juvenile poet expiring slowly while reciting the beautiful verses which he had long previously composed on a wounded soldier whose vital stream was, like his own, ebbing—eaque illi suprema vox fuit (2): almost every circumstance about Lucan's fate conspires to insure him our tender regard. Yet according to the Berlin Critics 'he was little better than a demon, and his Muse was truly infernal: —— the Pharsalia being an invective

(1) Andres, Letteratura T. 2. p. 126—30.
(2) Taciti Ann. Lib. xv. Cap. 70.

against absolute power, and even praising the regicide Brutus (1).' Now, as to preferring a Republic to a military despotism, I do think it is superfluous to defend either Lucan, or his admirer, Dante. M. Merian might possibly have meant to imitate the banter of the dedication of the Pharsalia, and to praise the sentiments which he appears to condemn: but this can be perceptible to his intimate friends alone, whereas the generous aim of the philosopher's nephew could scarcely have been dubious to any but those totally unworthy of perceiving it; besides which, no military master of the last century can be compared for a moment with the murderer of Brittanicus. So that in this case also (of concealed encomium) it would have become M. Merian to have testified less violence in speaking of one, whom he secretly revered and to whom he must have been conscious of being inferior in even political courage. As to the fall of Cæsar, it were sufficent for me to remark that those who blame Lucan's sentiments on that head, can have no reason to complain of Dante; for he severely condemns Brutus and Cassius, as we shall find: although he did not consider this difference of opinion to be a ground for denying the young author of the Pharsalia his poetical pre-eminence.

(1) Un poëte détestable qui blaspheme contre la famille royale . . . La Pharsale n' est qu' une invective contre le pouvoir absolu et le panegyrisme de l'esprit républicain. Le regicide Brutus . . . y est hautement applaudi. Merian, Mem. de l'Acad. de Berlin. 1778.

In truth both as to the slaying of Cæsar and to the conduct of Brutus, there was, is, and will be a pardonable diversity of judgment amongst the best men. Even allowing the perpetual Dictator to have been the noblest Character of all antiquity, he was the immediate destroyer of the established Constitution of his native land: and whoever believes that that constitution might have still survived, may think that (as a traitor only the more dangerous from being seemingly virtuous) he was avowedly guilty of an offence always held capital; that it was an aggravation of his offence, if he had so terrified or corrupted the lawful Magistrates that the laws, though not extinct, were silent; and infine that if he lived in acknowledged defiance of law, and had rendered justice so powerless, that she was evidently unable to put her sentence against him in execution by her usual Officers and ordinary means, the right of executing it by any possible means devolved upon every citizen, as in the case of a fearful outlaw. That precisely Brutus should have been that executioner, against his benefactor, perhaps his father, will to most people appear an infringement of the first of laws, the law of Nature. But those, who can without horror commemorate the tremendous equity of the elder Brutus, may remark that his descendent bore a name which bound him to the most splendid sacrifices; that the freedom acquired at such a bloody price by his family had a peculiar claim

on him; that if he had consulted his feelings, he would have betrayed his cause; that to have openly broken with the Dictator, after having in vain laboured to convert him, would have been to render the subversion of tyranny totally impracticable, whether by himself, or others; that no other Roman arm could be expected to strike for liberty, if his did not; and that that dearly purchased liberty was clearly at its crisis, to revive then, or never. But, whatever may be thought of his action in itself, the purity of his motives is less questionable; so that to him most fairly may be applied the verses directed to his ancestor — 'Unhappy Chieftain! Whatever be the decision of Posterity as to the morality of thy deed, noble were the aspirations of thy bosom, inflamed by love of Country and inextinguishable thirst of praise!'

Infelix! utcumque ferent ea facta Minores,
Vincet amor patriæ laudumque immensa cupido (1).

K. — XCII.

'Loftiest poet!' (altissimo poeta) was the title by which Virgil was announced; who now tells us that that title, though only intoned once at his entrance by a loud solitary voice (la voce sola), was not for him alone, but also for the other four, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan — who honour

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 822.

him and do well, since in honouring him they honour their common art and themselves.

L. —— XCVI.

The Quarterly Review asserts preremptorily, against universal opinion, that this eagle is not Homer, but Virgil; —a violence to the text above my comprehension (1). By what straining logic can Homer be called one of the pupils (la bella scuola) of Virgil? Dante had already called Homer 'the sovereign poet;' which agrees well with this phrase of his 'out-soaring all others like an eagle.' That *altissimo* was applied in a preceding verse to

(1) No. XLII. p. 512. The whole passage is remarkable. To understand Homer here is a vulgar *error*, and to think Dante knew Homer in Greek is a *mistake*: yet the first is assertion without a single reason given, and the second contradicts history, and is built on a false quotation. For firstly, it says one Pindar's Latin translation of the Iliad was well known in Italy even previous to Dante, whereas I have cited his own words affirming that *Homer was never translated into Latin* (Hell, Comment, Canto III. p. 199); so that even supposing Pindar's translation not quite fabulous (which it may well be), it was at least a treasure unknown to the most learned man in Italy: and secondly, it represents Dante as speaking of 'two *Latin* translations' of Aristotle; whereas there is nothing about *Latin* in the original—the words being simply *two translations*; la sua sentenza non si truova cotale nell' una traslazione come nell' altra. Convito, p. 100. He is so far from saying they were both in *Latin*, that it is probable one of them was the Arabic version of Averroes, —a book then much in vogue in Italy; indeed so much so, that S. Thomas Aquinas suspecting its infidelity got over a few Greek copies of Aristotle from Greece. They were the first known in modern Italy (Gradenigo, Lett. Greco-Ital.): so considering their scarcity, for they were imported only some years previous to Dante's time, and the dearness and scarcity of all M. S. S., and his wanderings and poverty, it is no proof of his utter ignorance of Greek that he had no Greek Aristotle in his possession.

Virgil is no proof it means him here; for (as I have said commenting it) that 'title bright' refers to the elevated nature of the poetry cultivated by the whole group, and not to the individual merit of Virgil; who explains it so himself, saying it belonged to each of them — ciascun meco si conviene nel nome ec.

M. — XCIX.

My translation answers equally, whether di tanto means di tanto onore, as many think, or di ciò, as the Academy decides, or incontinent, de suite, as a French Reviewer contends. Notre ancien Francais disait dans le même sens *à tant:* le dictionnaire de Nicol traduit *à tant* par his dictis, his peractis: les Espagnols entanto par interea (1). But the same word, interea, is also in the Vocabolario given the same meaning, intanto; so that it seems the Academicians (with a minuteness of distinction scarcely attainable by an Oltremontano) do not consider intanto and di tanto quite synonimous.

N. — CII.

'Who but will admire, if not entirely blind, the modesty of our poet in calling himself only the *sixth* in a company, where he is really on a perfect equality with the *first* (2)?'

(1) Journal des Savans, 1818.
(2) Biagioli, Comento, Vol. 1. p. 82.

O. —— CXX.

A more characteristic picture in a few words has scarcely ever been drawn of the worthies of Antiquity: it possesses a mild solemnity that I do not find in the Aeneid. But the sketch of the rest (with the exception of the castle) is there. 'The verdant lawn' is prata recentia rivis; and the 'open, lofty, lightsome hill,'

Hoc superate jugum. . . . .
. . . . . camposque nitentes
Desuper ostentat. . . . . .
Et tumulum capit, unde omnes longo ordine possit
Adversos legere et venientum discere vultus(1).

The imitation however displays the usual sobriety of Dante's judgment: for he quits his original the moment it contains any thing too difficult, or impossible to be reconciled with the tenets of Christianity; and instead of passing in review, like Anchises, both the shades of the dead and of those yet unborn, he limits his observations to the dead.

P. —— CXXI.

Electra (avia vetustissima (2)) was the mother, by Jove, of Dardanus founder of Troy; whence lineally 'Priam, Aeneas, the Cæsarian line, and the royal house of France,' says Boccaccio run-

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 671—754.
(2) Monarchia Lib. 2. p. 33.

ning along the genealogical stem (1). As the great mother of nations, whence all the mightiest families remarkable for either the best or the most evil deeds have sprung, she is appositely placed at the head of the procession:

> Dardanus, Iliacæ primus pater urbis et auctor,
> Electrâ, ut Graii perhibent, Atlantide cretus
> Advehitur Teucros; Electram maximus Atlas
> Edidit, æthereos humero qui sustinet orbes (2).

Q. —— CXXIV.

La Pentesilea (with the article by way of emphasis) was a Queen slain by Achilles during the Trojan war.

R. —— CXXIII.

The Gentleman who jocosely explains this line —— César, a qui le poëte donne les yeux d'un oiseau de proie (3) —— if he had ever observed the fine, flashing eyes of a hawk, and recollected what is come down to us of the wonderful efficacy of Cæsar's glance (4), would not have been shocked at the impropriety of the figure. M. Biagioli (connecting armato with occhi) interprets, 'armed with eyes,' ridiculing the drawing of the hero with

(1) Comento Vol. I. p. XII.
(2) Aeneid: Lib. VIII. v. 134.
(3) Ginguené. Hist. Litt. de l'Italie. Vol. II. p. 42.
(4) Nigris vegetisque occulis. Suetonii vita Cæs. Cap. 45.

a helmet on his head and a sword by his side (1); and, if there were no other mode to obviate the supposing of *offensive* weapons in Cæsar's hand, I should follow that interpretation: but by translating armato, not armed, but *mailed*, every difficulty is removed; for a picture representing a Roman General mailed, that is, in his military robe, and with the insignia of his high rank (though in other respects unarmed and bare-headed) and with an aspect of terrible majesty, would certainly be not liable to an accusation of incongruity. Mr. Cary, by making occhi grifagni "hawk's eye," puts the species for the variety: for grifagno (in English a *soarage*) means a young falcon taken from the eyrie when able to fly and after its first mewing, that is, in winter; and it is in contradistinction with nidiaco (a *bowet*), or one caught in the nest still unfledged; and with ramingo (*a brancher*), or one strong enough to hop about the tree, though not yet quite winged (2). The two latter kinds are very tractable: but the first, when once reclaimed, is far preferable for its strength and prodigious boldness, which are well revealed by the fire of its eyes. Dante is continually showing his familiarity with hawking; of which recreation

(1) Chi intese che dipinse il Poeta quell' eroe con indosso la corazza e l'elmo in testa, e la spada al fianco, fece un bello scappuccio. *Comento*. Vol. 1. p. 83.

(2) Treatise on Faulconry etc.

Boccaccio was, I presume, no partaker; for he misinterprets occhj grifagni 'eyes of a grifon (1).'

S. —— CXXIV.

. . . . . Volscâ de gente Camilla
Bellatrix . . . . pharetrata Camilla (2).

The female names that follow are glories of womankind: Lavinia, mother of Rome: —— the pure, devoted Marcia, whose prayer to her revered lord is so feelingly dwelt on in the Pharsalia, and the Convito (3). 'While I had the form and spirit of youth, I performed the duties of a wife and mother in all things obedient to thy will; but now that I am bent with years, widowed, and worn out, permit me, o Cato, in recompense of my dutiful affection, to re-ascend thy immaculate couch and to glory once more in the title (it can be only a title) of being thy spouse a second time, and of having thy name inscribed on my sepulchre (4).' —— Cornelia, daughter of Scipio and mother of the Gracchi, as remarkable for her soundness of understanding and her eloquence, as for the domestic virtues: —— Julia, daughter of Cæsar and wife of Pompey, she whose prudence was for a while the only remaining

(1) Comento. Vol. I. p. 219.
(2) Aeneid. Lib. VII. v. 803. — Lib. XI. v. 649.
(3) Pag. 206.
(4) . . . . . Da fœdera, risci
Illibata thori; da tantum nomen inane
Connubii; liceat tumulo scripsisse CATONIS
MARCIA. Pharsalia, Lib. 2. v. 344.

link that held the republic together, and whose death (caused by sudden dismay at the sight of some crimson gouts on her husband's cloak, whose fate involved that of her country) was followed by the sorrow of all good men, and by the breaking out of those civil wars that overturned Roman liberty: — and

" Collatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste (1), "

whose virtue and disaster gave immediate birth to the most celebrated of commonwealths; when Brutus, throwing off his disguise, swore by the adored Capitol to revenge the effusion of her pure blood.

T. — CXXIX.

The introduction of Saladin, with an article expressive of 'lordly' eminence, is just; and the describing of him as 'lonely (2)', that is, as the only one of the same tribe in Elysium, is perhaps equally just: it must have been very peculiar merit in a Soldan that could compensate for his despotic sway. But Saladin is represented by even his adversaries as a noble character; and his courtesy to our

(1) Rape of Lucrece.

(2) Mr. Cary's *fierce* (" the Soldan *fierce* ") is an interpolation; and one quite out of the spirit of the original. For, solo, *alone* is the only epithet in it

Solo in parte vidi 'l Saladino;

and it is accompanied by the definite article, which in Italian is like a title of nobility, well agreeing with that Saracen's rank and virtues:

The lonely, lordly Saladin.

Cœur-de-lion endears him to Englishmen: at least to every Englishman that disapproves of Mr. Hume's epithet *barbarous*, in speaking of a Prince whose name was long synonimous both in Asia and in Europe with generosity and romantic valour. At the siege of Jaffa, Saladin perceiving our Monarch (who had just disembarked) directing the operations on foot, sent him by an equerry a horse, saying that it ill became so illustrious a personage to be seen without one: a compliment which the gallant Richard answered politely, and, without hesitation, accepted his enemy's gift (1). In one respect the Czar Peter I. was not singular; for Saladin also is said to have consulted the benefit of his realm by travelling, disguised as a merchant with two companions, through Armenia to Greece, Sicily, Naples, Rome, Tuscany, Lombardy, Spain, France, and Germany, in order to study the laws and customs of those countries (2).' It is observable that there is one great political question on which Dante does not touch — the Crusades: yet, if a passion for these was really "in that age a passion for glory (3)," it is no small encomium on the steadiness of his reason, that, though so ardent after glory, he could abstain from commending

(1) Jussit statim per armigerum illi equum transmitti, dicens non decere tam sublimem virum tali loco inter suos sine equo consistere; quem Rex gratanter accipiens, curialitatem ejus collaudens gratias illi egit. Chron. Pip. ap. Mur. Rer. Ital. Scrip. T. IX. p. 604.

(2) Lan. Comento. p. 29.

(3) Hume. Hist. Vol. 3. p. 113.

them; — a temptation too strong for his immediate successor Petrarch, who was heard to call for the expulsion of the *dogs* from Jerusalem with almost as much warmth as that of foreigners from Italy (1). But if Dante indulged in no panegyric of the holy wars, neither did he undertake to reprobate them. It is reasonable to conclude, that his silence was the result of indecision. It was horrible to make religion a pretext for war: —but to this accusation the Turks were liable as well as the Christians; and if these had not assailed part of Asia, those might have overrun the whole of Europe; there was an extreme necessity of giving some outlet to the rapine and immorality of the age, and it was no slender justification — justum bellum quibus necessarium; to a scrutinizing mind some of the remoter benefits might have been discernible, the increase of commerce and of the arts of civilization from a communication with the "east where those had then their chief seat (2)," and even the diminution of the very ignorance and bigotry that first produced the expeditions. These considerations might have well made any wise and virtuous man doubt, and, doubting, remain silent.

(1) Il sepolcro di Cristo è in man di *Cani*. Trionfo della Fama. Cap. 2.

(2) Hume. Hist. vol. 1. p. 391.

U. —— CXXXI.

Aristotle was the master of the schools in Dante's day; although that supremacy was very soon after (1) conferred on its true owner, Plato (2). Landino hesitates between two such great men as Plato and Aristotle: but surely, by saying that the latter excelled in natural, and the former in moral philosophy, he pronounces their respective rank. I know what is the fashion of the day; and that the chymist who freezes mercury in your presence, divides a sunbeam, or galvanizes a rabbit, plumes himself on the solidity of his discoveries, while the discussor of an ethical question is treated as a visionary. The exact sciences, (as they are inaptly termed) are, it is said, those most deserving of serious attention, because they furnish certain results: —— a doctrine well calculated to form able generals and calculators, (but not virtuous patriots) and therefore one little obnoxious to the worst tyrants, and often even encouraged by them in order to divert their slaves from higher pursuits; so that, instead of being an argument in favour of the perfectibility of the human-kind, because it at this moment produces a temporary increase of the arts of luxury, it appears to me to be a melancholy proof of the decline of the present generation

(1) In Petrarch's time. Trionfo della Fama, Cap. 3.

(2) . . . divinum illum virum quem . . . . sæpius fortasse laudo quam necesse est. De Legibus, Lib. III. p. 1.

and of the approaching downfall of those arts themselves, by the ruin of that public spirit which had been an incentive in producing them. But I also know, that this assumption of exactness in physical researches was denied by one of the wisest of our fellow creatures, "Socrates; who applied himself wholly to the moral part of philosophy and neglected the natural, as a study too fanciful and uncertain (1)." And is not his opinion warranted by the fact? Is not natural philosophy, (that pretends to evidence because it addresses, not the intellect, but the senses) remarkable for its continual fluctuation, not merely with the revolutions of centuries, but with every change of season, not with the rise or fall of mighty empires, but with the female fashions of every month? Are those who were authorities in chemistry ten years ago to be relied on now? Must not a student purchase his scientifick journal like a lady's magazine, and unlearn this week what he was at pains to learn last? Even the word of Newton ceases to be revered as law. Except then it can be shown (which it cannot) that physical science is always in a state of progressive improvement, its variations testify that it is, in practice as well as in theory, far more uncertain than that philosophy whose principles are drawn from a few fixed phenomena invariably found in the human mind. These phe-

(1) Athenian Letters T. 1. p. 94 — Academicorum Lib. 1. Cap. 4.

nomena form part of our nature: and in those instances where they seem eradicated, it is only a false appearance: or if they sometimes can really be eradicated, it is at the expense of vast pains. It has pleased the Creator to implant in every breast the primary laws of morality, and to confer on our sentiments a stability which our senses do certainly not possess; our thoughts are evidently less exposed to violence than our members; and, in spite of cavillers, it is an impugnable position that it is much easier to deceive our eyes, or put them out altogether, than to cheat or totally corrupt a sound understanding. The duties of a citizen laid down by Cicero, or of a general by Homer, or Xenophon, are his duties still, for the distinctions between vice and virtue are and must be eternal; as whispers that inseparable, interior monitor that is not to be readily fooled, like the taste, smell, or sight. To develope those eternal distinctions is (or ought to be) the object of the analysis of the intellect; and, since they are eternal, all the consequences fairly drawn from them must be eternal and exactly true (1). But even though natural philo-

(1) "This (says Shaftesbury)" is the Philosophy which by nature has the pre-eminence above all other science or knowledge. Nor can this surely be of the sort called vain or deceitful; since it is the only means by which I can discover vanity and deceit. For mathematicians are divided; and mechanics proceed as well on one hypothesis as on the other. *Of this*, says one, *I have clear ideas*. *Of this*, says the other, *I can be certain*. *And what*, say I, *if in the whole matter there be no certainty at all?* Charac. Vol. 1. p. 256—60.

sophers could pretend to an equal exactitude in their researches, yet they were for ever precluded from rivalling with moral science by its superior nobility. It were a question between matter and mind; it were whether the mind should stoop to the clod on which we tread, or soar to the investigation of her immortal origin: — an ethereal flight that is scarcely more a vindication of her own glory, than a practical, physical benefit. For by it men are restrained from mutual wrongs and disasters; nations learn the road to honour and happiness; and individuals their rights and duties. It is a study that can be prosecuted in every situation; whether free, or in a dungeon; in crowds, or in solitude; in wealth, or in poverty; in academic bowers mid books and observatories and laboratories, or in the absence of all such aids; in the possession of health and the full acuteness of the senses, or (like Milton) blind and infirm; in the smiles of a court, or in the grapple of a tyrant; — a study that teaches, not to decompose or guide the elements, but, what are far more sublime, immaterial spirits; and subjects to our sway, not earthly atoms but thinking beings, not a brittle lens or furnace, but machines of power almost illimitable, the hopes and fears, passions and energies of our fellow-creatures.

W. —— CXXXVI.

It is no longer a question of precedence: the

names that follow are evidently thrown promiscuously in the text, as chance and rhyme decided. "Democritus, the laughing philosopher, made himself famous for maintaining the atomical system: of which I shall only say, that it excludes the existence of a Deity, and ascribes the formation of the world to the fortuitous concourse of unperishable atoms endowed with motion. The strange humour and temper of the man is not unsuitable to so strange a doctrine (1)." This is well and succintly conveyed by the Italian, il mondo pone a caso. The Stoics, Ionics, and Cynics are represented by Zeno, Thales, Diogenes, and Anaxagoras, master of all-accomplished Pericles. Empedocles was a good poet, physician and sorcerer; in one or other of which capacities he is said to have resuscitated a young girl. But if he prolonged her life, he balanced the account by shortening his own (2): however not before giving Cleander a splendid Pythagorean entertainment consisting "of an ox all made of paste composed of myrh, frankincense and spice (3)." Heraclitus I pronounce with the penultimate short, as it is in the original, and in Petrarch (4). Dioscorides was the father of botany;

(1) Athenian Letters. Vol. 1. p. 228.
(2) . . . Deus immortalis haberi
Dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam
Insiluit. De arte poet.
(3) Ath. Lett. Vol 1. p. 280.
(4) Vidi in suoi detti Eraclito coperto.
Trionfo della Fama, Cap. 3.

which Dante somewhat quaintly expresses by 'the good collector of qualities.' The usual reading in verse 141 is Linus; but one old edition (1) has Livius, and it is so much more probable that some early copyist had made a blunder and led others into it, than that Dante should have preferred inserting a half-fabulous bard (particularly after having already named one of the same order, Orfeus) rather than the great Roman historian, whose name is pronounced so honourably in another Canto (2), that I do not hesitate to write Livius. Moreover this is a verse with which copyists have certainly tampered: for in the text which Dante's son, Peter, used, there is neither Linus nor Livius, but

Tullio almo e Seneca morale;

although indeed Linus be inserted as a various reading in the comment (3). The Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy was to our poet, more than Newton and Herschell are to us. The Spanish-Arabians, or Moors, Avicen and Averroes, were medical sophists. The former did for his Master Galen in physic, what Plato did for Socrates in philosophy, he wrote and explained his precepts. Averroes was however more an astronomer and moralist than a physcian; and translated the works of Aristotle from Greek into Arabic and commented

(1) La Nidobeatina.
(2) Inf. Canto XXVIII. v. 12.
(3) Bib. Laurenziana. Plut. XL. Coll. 38.

them at vast length. That this version of Averroes became familiar among the Italians as early as 1200 is equally conclusive of their proficiency in the Oriental tongues, whether they translated it into Latin, or continued to use it in the Arabic: and at last it made such noise that the Council of Vienna prohibited its being used in schools, on account of Mussulman errors thought to be in it: but the book had still more fame when, after Dante's death, it was interpreted by an Italian friar and gave employment to all the philosophers and divines throughout Europe in attack or defence (1). Petrarch himself was involved in the controversy: and the literary world became divided into Averroists and Anti-Averroists; even in a very modern pamphlet I find Averroes quoted three several times in a few pages (2). He was then no common mind; and, however right it be to peruse little of his lore at present, it was fair to number him among the group that waited on that mighty genius, to the interpreting of whose writings he had devoted his labour: so that Monsieur Guinguené might here again have spared a tart observation (3). Neither Religion, nor Government, has suffered any radical alteration amongst the Moors and their superiority to other nations in personal strength and beauty is the same as ever: still are

(1) Tiraboschi. Vol. 5. passim.
(2) Bulgarini, Repliche, p. 22—29—74.
(3) ... *jusqu'à* l'Arabe Averrhoès. Hist. Litt. de l'Italie. Vol. 2. p. 42.

the philosophers, poets, and warriors degraded into vile, ignorant assassins (1).

(1) I was at Tangier in 1815. An inoffensive French gentleman was shot while walking on the roof of his Consul's house; nor was satisfaction expected, nor, I believe, asked for the murder. Even our own government (whose influence was at that time greater than any other Christian one) could have obtained none. Admiral Penrose's surgeon, Mr. Williams, a young man of superior abilities, was assassinated in full view of Gibraltar, at foot of the other pillar of Hercules: and when a naval officer and I returned, with an order from the Pacha himself, to get the canon, anchor, etc, of the wreck of our little gun-boat, the same Moors seized and carried me into the hills, where, during seven hours, I had their muskets above an hundred times at my breast; nor do I now well conceive how among so many triggers not one went off. Perhaps in the very wantonness of barbarity they disdained killing a man whom they had so completely in their power; perhaps it was my own composure: but it is not likely such an escape will occur again. They have a fine, fierce breed of black dogs. He who was called their Governor had one, of which, he said, he would make me a present in return for a present of a barrel of gun-powder; for that Moors never *sold* their dogs. I suspected it was a blood-hound; upon which his Excellency, thinking I asked whether it could kill a man, had a Jew taken (the Captain of the very felucca in which we came from Tangier for the canon) proposing to set his dog fairly at him. If in two minutes the Jew was not dead, I was to have the animal immediately for nothing: otherwise I was to send the gun-powder from Gibraltar, and the bearer of it was to receive the dog: besides (to obviate any complaints to the Pacha) the naval officer and I were to sign a declaration that the Jew was killed by accident in lifting the canon. Waving the trial as superfluous, I closed the bargain. Had I afterwards kept my promise, he would have broken his: and perhaps murdered the bearer of the gun-powder. It was in escaping from the wreck Williams fell. Four of our sailors too were wounded. There were twelve in a crazy, stoven-in skiff — amid wild waves — still wilder savages firing from the shore — fifteen miles to the nearest refuge. Williams was shot right through the brain; he never moved, but stiffened; so that when we raised him out of the boat at Tangier, he was still sitting with his face turned frowning towards the coast and his arms a-kimbo, exactly as when the volley was fired. His wife was a little Jew girl, whom he had ran away with at Gibraltar and had had baptized on board the Admiral's ship. Though not quite four-

X. —— CLI.

Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucan, like Anchises, remain in Elysium; while Virgil and Dante prosecute their journey, like Aeneas. But the latter returned up to his ships

Ille viam secat ad naves, sociosque revisit (1);

and our pair descend into the second infernal circle, where begins the region of punishment, Hell vulgarly so called, or Tartarus.

teen she was three months advanced towards maternity. Her father, one of the richest on the rock, had disinherited her for changing religion. But, as she was an only child, her mother came to see her in her widowhood; and it was hoped even her father would relent. She had but one Christian friend; and, when he was lost, she perhaps became Jewess again. She now separated from him for the first time. She followed him to the beach weeping bitterly and was so bent on embarking, that, to get her to return, he had to chide her. Whether it was a presentiment or not, it is certain, that the burthen of her lament was *I'll never see you more:* one could hear her repeating it even after the boat was pushed off to some distance. We buried Williams in the Swedish Consul's garden. It lies a little without Tangier. He sleeps surrounded with the most beautiful myrtles in the world. There were few handsomer men than Williams; few prettier creatures than his wife. His corpse wrapt in a cloak and borne by those rough, yet sorrowing tars — our slender escort of the Consuls of the place — the splendour of the day — the groups of Moors in their *haicks*, fine, though ferocious figures, and now quietly looking on — the odours and flowery shrubs of that lovely garden — the touching funeral service read by our Consul, Mr. Green, to whom I was Clerk — at a little distance the sparkling sea, and, beyond it, Gibraltar on whose summit waved the flag, which neither protected, nor avenged him who was now to be interred within view of it — and, with all that, a slight sense of danger to ourselves formed the most impressive whole I ever saw.

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v 899.

COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE FIFTH.

A. —— 1.

Here we enter the region of punishment, where the infernal judge, sentencing the wicked, decides what place they are to occupy, whether in this second circle, or farther below. This second circle is the beginning of what is vulgarly called Hell (1) —— the seat of eternal woe. It is the Infernus damnatorum of Catholicism, the sixth circle of Virgil, or Tartarus; within which Aeneas (though he descries it at a distance) does not only not venture, but is even dissuaded by the Sybil from inquiring much about it:

.....Ne quære doceri
Quam pœnam, aut quæ forma viros fortunave mersit (2).

The Pagan Tartarus and this portion of the christian hell are in the strictest sense of the word synonimous: they both mean an eternity of ineffable torment;

(1) C'est au second cercle que commence proprement l'enfer. Hist. Litt. d'Italie. Vol. 2. p. 43.

(2) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 614.

..... sedet, æternumque sedebit,
Infelix .....
Non, mihi si linguæ centum sint, oraque centum,
Omnia pœnarum percurrere nomina possim (1).

But the Sybil is most cursory; whereas Dante 'sups on horrors' in the long residue of 30 Cantos of the present Canticle. Here then he leaves the beaten track; and really undertakes (what in Paradise Lost will by every reader of the Divine Comedy be restricted to the English language) "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." The plan of the Aeneid being left, the imitations of its passages diminish too; so I shall become less profuse of quotations, which I should have been more fearful of multiplying, had I not been encouraged by the expressions of Macrobius when instituting a comparison between Homer and Virgil (2).

In sitting down to read this Canto, it were well to prepare the mind by reflecting (as the Author probably did before beginning its composition) that it is to close with one of the most pathetic stories upon record: nor would it derogate much from either the magnificent theme of the poem, or the gravity of the poet, to suppose that it was for the sake of introducing that story this entire Canto was composed. Hence all those named throughout it are distinguished historic personages, who

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 617 — 625.
(2) Quid enim suavius quam duos præcipuos vates audire idem loquentes? Saturnalia, Lib. v. Cap. 3.

(however their characters differed in other respects) were similar in one common misfortune, that of having been brought to a premature end by erring love: and if the freshest memorial left behind by the verses is not those immortal Demigods and Heroines, but *Francesca da Rimini*; then was never any such unfading garland hung on the bier of a private female; and, in comparison with it, the tu Marcellus eris of Virgil is a cold gallantry: and no wonder, since one bard wrote to compliment an Empress, and the other to rescue from obloquy his own friend's lovely child. Yet, strange to say, this consideration, of her being the daughter of his friend, has been urged against his putting of her in hell. But Dante was none of those heartless panegyrists who deal in undistinguishing apotheosis. Her bloody catastrophe already public, and her error probably much exaggerated by the Italian factions, her full justification would never have been admitted. Would it have been truer friendship to have left her unnoticed by his muse? I think not. Would he have insured her more sympathy by placing her in Purgatory, or in Elysium? or, by braving opinion, in Paradise? I think not. A distracted mother, a perhaps more wretched, because a self-accusing father, admiration, anger, sorrow, gratitude agitated the soul of Dante; who wrote this Canto (as some aver, though probably it is a mistake) in the very room where the unfortunate girl was brought up. Not all this

could make him run the hazard of incurring the suspicion of undue partiality, or a want of morals: his scope was too lofty to permit his doing so for the sake of any individual gratification; besides, his judgment told him it would not have answered his purpose, and his confidence in his own genius that it was not necessary. The feelings of the heart engaged him to weep for her disaster; and a still more sacred sentiment (if there be one) to avoid advocating even the appearance of immorality. Hence he has at the same time made her an object of tender pity, and her lapse of the fullest measure of an ultra-orthodox severity: or rather he has converted that severity from its tendency to awaken dislike, into one of the most delicious sensations of our nature, pity (1). The stern moralist was well aware of the fount he could command; that in proportion as the writer was rigid, the reader would be compassionate; that by not acting himself as her apologist, he insured her many; and that

(1) The remark of a recent Critic is not only misplaced, but proves that he did not understand the first principle on which is built this melancholy episode of Francesca and Paul — ce ne sont pas des damnés, puisqu'ils sont et puisqu'ils seront toujours ensemble: for if this be a mere figure of rhetoric, it is insipid; since it substitutes a conceit for deep commiseration; and if it be offered as matter of fact, it is incorrect, since they are in the hell-of-the-damned; in its mildest because its uppermost circle it is true, yet within the verge of that place of 'eternal wail.' Its sufferings are indeed allayed by the survival of that which is celestial virtue when well, and even when ill directed is the least unpardonable of human foibles, love: yet is this region (as forming part of the hell-of-the-damned) a place of punishment, severe punishment. Hist. Litt. d'Italie, Vol. 2. p. 52.

his reserve would engage generous minds to be indefatigable in searching for documents that might, if not prove her innocence entirely, at least palliate her weakness. No female then ever had an abler advocate; no friend, a trustier guardian. In their most pathetic passages we rather admire Homer, Virgil, Milton, Tasso, than sympathize deeply with the sorrows of their personages. "To melt the heart" was not a primary object with them, nor with Dante. With tragedians it is; and on this plea alone (if he had no other) Shakespere deserves the dramatic laurel: but if Dante (amid so many still more urgent, epic duties) produced in this multifarious poem a scene or two as pathetic as any in the drama, it is a great merit.

This Circle is 14 miles deeper down than the former one (1). It is not divided like it; but, like it, it presents all round a walk 17 ½ miles broad, with a wall 14 miles high on one hand, and on the other the brink of the horrid, central orifice that leads below into the ever-deepening horrors of hell. It is clear, that, by calling it in the approaching verses a 'narrower room' (men luogo cinghia), Dante means only that its extreme dimensions across from wall to wall (the orifice included) are less; which is certain, for as we descend towards the arena of the Coliseum the *general* space neces-

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto IV. p. 220.

sarily narrows at every step, whatever be the size of each *particular* tier.

B. —— VI.

Quæsitor Minos urnam movet: ille silentum
Conciliumque vocat, vitasque et crimina discit (1).

Having already vindicated this employment of classical allegories (2), I shall only remark the particulars in which Dante varies here what he imitates. He puts Minos within Tartarus, where all who come before him are really guilty of some transgression; Virgil, on the contrary, sets Gnossius and Rhadamanthus over Tartarus, and makes Minos preside near the entry of hell; whence it seems that all the souls who come into any part of hell, (even Elysium) are judged by him; which implies the error of reproaching them all with crimes —— crimina discit, and of saying nothing about their virtues. Dante preferred uniting the two tribunals of the Latin into one, as is manifest by his description of the self-confession —— subigitque fateri (3). The Master gave Minos a human shape and invested him with the usual insignia of a Roman judge, an urn: the pupil, attending to the more horrible station assigned by him to Minos, clothed him in the form of a demon; and substituted for that antiquated urn (which would

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 432.
(2) Hell, Comment, Canto III. p. 206.
(3) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 567.

now suggest an idea quite remote from the unerring nature of true justice) the silent curling of an enormous tail, which the frightful inquisitor wreathes round his own loins in as many rings as is the number of the circle to which the culprit under examination is sentenced. With both poets, Minos is a personification of remorse of conscience, of Isaiah's 'undying worm', of the secret spy whom, as Juvenal tells us, we have clinging night and day within our bosoms, and who thus prevents the possibility of any malefactor's being acquitted in his own opinion —— nemo se judice nocens absolvitur. To entitle this accusing voice Minos, is equally licit in every persuasion, Pagan or Christian: Dante selected that title because it had been sanctified by the muse; and Virgil, because it was the usual imagery of his day. Progeny of a Phenician mother and a Cretan Sovereign, (whom for his virtues whatever his name, whether Jupiter, or Asterius, men honoured after his death as a divine being) Minos became himself king of Crete; and ennobled the island with laws and cities (1). As Numa did afterwards, he used to retire to a grotto for celestial advice; and there be favoured by visitations, not of a Goddess, but (as he affirmed) of his own Sire, the Sire of Gods and men. There is perhaps less attraction in this fable, than in that of Egeria; but it is more in harmony with the

(1) Genealogia Deor. Lib. xi. Cap. 26.

lofty notion of universal jurisprudence: and in somewhat of a similar proportion was testified the gratitude of their fellow-kind to the two beneficent monarchs; for one was raised to the rank of a royal Saint by vulgar opinion, and the other to presidency in that future court, whose decisions are unerring in their justice, and in their operations irrevocable.

C. —— CXV.

From this tiercet is necessarily deduced what I affirmed a little above, that all the remainder of hell is Tartarus; and that every soul who passeth the tribunal at the entrance of this second circle is consigned to some degree of everlasting pain —— *son giù volte*.

D. —— XX.

Facilis descensus Averni
Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est (1).

The Italian is rather an allusion to this, than an imitation of it. Rapidity and condensation, better than the Sybil's metrical harmony, became the Judge of the abyss, and Dante here again displays his usual correct taste. He might too have had in mind (particularly in the recommendation to

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 126.

beware of one by whom he might be 'led astray,' that is, of Virgil — guarda... di cui tu ti fide) the expressions of the Gospel, "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.... Beware of false prophets (1)."

E. — xxiv.

If the menace of Minos be sublime, far sublimer is the reply. For the first words of my translation of it I must crave excuse; they do not literally construe perchè pur gride. But this simple check, when taken with the context, conveys such sense of mild command, that I, in three instances, found it forcibly recall to those perusing this Canto for the first time (in the original I mean) the repulse given by our Saviour to Satan — "Get thee behind me (2):" so that, despairing of suggesting that venerable association of ideas by any other means, I was at last emboldened to introduce our Saviour's own words; and, since I could not retain both the expressions and the spirit of my author, I surrendered the former, in the hope of being able to preserve the latter (3). The rest of the reply is an exact Homeric repetition of the one before made to Charon in the third Canto; and all the

(1) Mathew. vii. 13—15.

(2) Luke. iv. 8.

(3) Mr. Cary's "wherefore exclaimest?" preserves neither the one, nor the other: for it does not render *pur* (which has much signification here); and it is quite devoid of majesty.

grandeur attributed to it on that occasion is increased by its being thus formally repeated (1).

F. —— XXVII.

Here then they actually step into the hell of the damned; and up to this moment, all the scenes of penalty or pleasure we witnessed had nothing to do with the home of infinite woe, the tartarean abode, usually, but incorrectly, designated by the generic term, hell (2). This dreaded portion of the infernal regions, 'we're now within,' and shall continue to be so until the end of the present Canticle.

G. —— XXVIII.

The muteness of the light is a repetition of the figure already used in the first Canto: 'where the sun is mute' (3).

H. —— XXXIX.

The *ruin* of the text is, in my opinion, the mouth of the abyss, which (as I have so often repeated (4)) stands yawning in the centre of each circle; until we arrive at the very bottom of the infernal amphitheatre. Whenever the cross-wind blows the shades into the vicinity of the brink of that horrific mouth,

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto III. p. 205.
(2) Id. Id. Canto II. p. 138.
(3) Id. Id. Canto I. p. 37.
(4) Id. Id. Canto IV. p. 220.

they shriek, and shudder, and curse, from their apprehension of being blown within its ruinous ring, and so tumbling deeper into damnation. This is the obvious interpretation of quando giungon davante alla ruina; so I translate it '*central ruin:* but many think *ruina* rather implying, that there were sharp rocks in the face of the wall separating the first and second circles; and that it was when tost against those ruinous rocks, that the ghosts cried out.

I. —— XXXVII.

That Dante asked who those suffering spirits were, and that Virgil told him, is supposed to be implied by the *intesi* in the text; 'although,' says M. Biaggioli, 'the question and answer are omitted for sake of brevity (1).' It seems to me briefer to understand neither as made, and that this is a mere poetic pre-statement of what is literally asked and answered a few verses later —— 'Whom does the black air so scourge?' It is superfluous to consider this question put and answered twice.

K. —— XL.

This simile, and the other that follows were evidently taken from Homer; as their juxta-position still more than their mere versification, proves.

(1) Dimandò a Virgilio chi erano quegli afflitti, ed egli glielo aperse; ma tace, per brevità, e la demanda e la risposta. Comento, vol. I. p. 97.

Homer had two objects to depict, —— the exultation of the warlike Greeks while disembarking, and the noisy, un-soldierly array of the Trojans while advancing to battle; and it has been considered as a blemish, that he applies exactly the same metaphor to both: which criticism, though not precisely just (since the birds indeed are the same, but in very different situations) is not devoid of plausibility. Dante also had two things to inforce, the number and confusion of the fluttering souls, and their cries: for which purposes he imitated the Homeric similitudes, but with variations. In the first of them, instead of repeating cranes, he specifies starlings (1). These perhaps were better adapted than the others to express confusion; he makes not any difference in their states, but evidently intends both starlings and cranes to be alike screaming under the influence of terror, and flying alike from an inclement climate; that is, that the 'wintry jaunt' of the present tiercet, as well as 'the sorrowing lays' of the following one, should be common to both. In the Iliad the cranes, and other feathery tribes, are at one time by "the windings of Cayster's springs" chirping at liberty; and at another flying from winter with screams. Here both cranes and starlings are routed by winter (χειμῶνα

(1) As starlings through the winter jaunting
Sail in a broad, disordered train,
So these go towering, cowering, slanting
To every point etc.

φύγον) and shriek piteously (κλαγγῇ) and fly disorderly

Τῶν δ' ὥς τ' ὀρνίθων πετεηνῶν ἔθνεα πολλὰ,
Χηνῶν, ἢ γεράνων, ἢ κύκνων δουλιχοδείρων,
Ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ποτῶνται, ἀγαλλόμεναι πτερύγεσσι,
Κλαγγηδὸν . . . . (1)

L. —— LXVI.

Ἠύτε περ κλαγγὴ γεράνων πέλει οὐρανόθι πρὸ,
Αἵτ' ἐπεὶ οὖν χειμῶνα φύγον καὶ ἀθέσφατον ὄμβρον(2).

If the χειμῶνα and the κλαγγὴ of this passage be, the one expressed, and the other understood in the preceding tiercets of the Italian, then is 'their disordered fluttering,' (which is taken from the first cited Greek verses ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα) to be, in its turn, considered as implied in the tiercet we are now commenting (3). Dante's interpreting of κλαγγῇ 'sorrowing lays' proves he knew Greek, vindicates Homer from a charge of inconsistency, and shows clearly that these metaphors were drawn, not from the Aeneid, but directly from the Iliad itself. It proves he knew Greek, by his receiving κλαγγὴ as a generic word, not exclusively meaning a cry of exultation, but simply a cry, which may signify either a shout of hilarity, or a scream of depression;

(1) Iliad. Lib. II. v. 459.
(2) Id. Id. III. v. 3.
(3) And as the cranes'long legions sloping
With sorrowing lays along the sky,
So, in the blasts that brook no coping,
Drive querulous people warping by.

either *cum clamore,* or *cum stridore:* for the former sense is the usual one, but this latter is the one conveyed by the *lai* of Dante. That lai here means '*sorrowing* lays' is certain from the context: whatever etymology we give the word (1). It vindicates Homer for it contrasts his two similes as much as the Trojans and Greeks by making κλαγγὴ mean querulous murmurs (cum stridore), while κλαγγηδον may retain its common acceptation of exulting cries. What could be more correctly applied to an unmilitary advance than those, or to the joyous disembarking of a fine army than these? Mr. Pope recognized no such distinction, and so translated *noise* in both places:

Now light with *noise* . . .
With *noise* and *order* . . . .

His interpolation of *order,* in the second passage, is to make the opposition between the two similes consist in the *disorder* of the birds on one occasion, and their *order* on the other; as if the similitudes were otherwise defective, from the total absence of contrast: but it were enough to have accompanied *noise* with specifiying epithets (as joyful, and querulous) without introducing an idea not perceptible in the Greek. Moreover *disorder* is thus attributed to the Greeks, and *order* to the Trojans; for at " Cayster's springs " the cranes fly about

(1) Boccaccio interprets it versi di lamentazione. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 290. and Dante himself uses it in the same signification in his Creed, pianti, stridi, ed infiniti lai. Credo, p. 141.

disorderly, and it is in their passage that they assume *order*. Homer scarcely intended that these similes should have more than one strict application — that of the cries made. Like cranes cried both Greeks and Trojans; but those exulting in their native marshes, and these flying from dreary winter — which ominous screaming is in strong opposition to the manly silence of his favourites when marching to battle

Οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἴσαν σιγῇ, μενέα πνείοντες Ἀχαιοὶ.

But Dante could not have made κλαγγῇ mean '*sorrowing* lays', had he (instead of borrowing from the original hellenic) had recourse to Virgil's copies; for in these there is nothing *sorrowful*, and the cries of the cranes are described as *happy* and *canorous* on both occasions. The first is

. . . . . *canoros*
Dant per colla modos: sonat amnis, et Asia longè
Pulsa palus (1) . . . .

the second

Strymoniæ dant signa grues, atque æthera tranant
Cum sonitu, fugiuntque notos clamore *secundo* (2).

Twice already have I spoken of Dante's knowledge of Greek (3) (a knowledge probably confined to a very few books — certainly he had no greek Aristotle); and cited out of his Monarchia greek written in greek characters; to which may be added

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VII. v. 700—Macrobius, Saturnalia, Lib. v. Cap. VIII.
(2) Id. Lib. X. v. 265. — Id. Id. Id. Cap. X.
(3) Hell, Comment, Canto III. p. 199. — Canto IV. p. 251.

crowds of greek words (as allos, comos [1]) in Roman letters; — a mode of writing lately proposed for general adoption in the study of all the oriental tongues, without its being known that he had already realized the project with respect to Greek; and (as we shall see) to Hebrew and Arabic. I at the same time noticed his familiarity with the Iliad and Odyssey, and quoted his own affirmation to prove he had never seen a Latin translation of those poems: so, be it asked again, in what language could he have read them? —

M. —— LX.

The manner in which the *darkness* of this circle is inculcated by 'the gloom,' the 'muteness of light,' etc. is to prevent our being surprised at Dante's dubious mode of apostrophizing Francesca and Paul, or at her thinking it necessary to state who she was. It is to prepare us for her appearance that the eminent characters, now about to be seen, are introduced. The first of them is Semiramis, the mightiest of female sovereigns, foundress of the Assyrian monarchy, who conquered the Medes and Persians, and India, and all the east, who led into the field an army of three millions of foot, fifty thousand horse, and a hundred thousand chariots, and was, in fine, buildress (after Nimrod) of the renowned Babylon —— "the golden cup

(1) Epistola Dantis D. K. G. de Scala. p. 3.

that made nations drunk, that dwelt upon many waters and abounded in treasures, and at whose fall the very earth was moved (1); "of the city to which ancient Rome and modern London were but pigmies. Yet these were the works of centuries; whereas Babylon is represented as having been, for the most part, founded and finished by the self-same Semiramis. 'As a proof of her marvellous activity' (says Boccaccio (2).)' we have the story, that, being engaged at her mirror when the tidings of a rebellion reached her, she started up with one half of her hair platted, and, hurrying to arms, finished the Campaign successfully before platting the remainder; which the returned to her mirror to do, as soon as the war was ended: in which posture, of platting her hair, the was represented in a statue that for ages remained in Babylon.' Dante commemorates her anew in his Monarchia(3), citing a verse from Ovid in her honor. Yet, in spite of such elevated merits, history accuses her of having possessed a large share of frailty; and of even having made a law to authorize many of her amatory practises.

N. —— LXII.

Dante, in his account of Dido, follows his master, Virgil; to whom she would surely express her

(1) Jeremiah, Chap. 51.
(2) Comento, vol. 1. p. 293.
(3) . . . muris cinxis Semicramis Urbem. Monarchia, Lib. II. p. 49.

gratitude for the sweet imbalming of her name, if she be supposed to bear human feelings in the other world, or could she come back to this: for she would not, I think, relinquish that immortality of pity, for the best reputation given her by accurate chronologists. These prove she could not possibly have committed any breach of decorum with Aeneas, since she was not his cotemporary: still is it her supposed adventure with him that endears her to posterity; and painters, actors, and statuaries agree in transmitting the story of her interesting error; though, Macrobius remarks, they have been always well aware of its falshood; such influence has a poet's eloquence! — tantum valuit pulchritudo narrandi(1). Her real catastrophe is however far from being void of interest: and it engaged Petrarch to give her a conspicuous place in one of his Triumphs, as a victim, not of lawless love, but of exemplary chastity(2). 'The widow Dido,' according to this account, committed her suicide for, not a living, but a dead Lord: and such was her fidelity to the manes of Sicchæus, that, when compelled by her subjects to yield her hand to the king of Mauritania, she required a few days delay before the consummation of her marriage,

(1) Saturnalia, Lib. v. Cap. 17.

(2) Taccia il volgo ignorante: io dico Dido
Cui studio d'onestate a morte spinse
Non vano amor . . . .
Trionfo della Castità, p. 114.

promising then to *go to her husband*. The time was employed in erecting a vast funeral pile in the midst of Carthage: and she, at the appointed hour, attired like a queen, and attended by a solemn procession of her court and nation, (who deemed the sacrifice an expiation to be offered to the deceased monarch before her new nuptials) proceeded to the scaffolding; and, leaving her train at its foot, ascended alone, where, after having pronounced this short harangue, 'Citizens! I keep my promise; *I go to my husband*,' her own royal dagger sheathed itself in her heart (1).

O.—— LXIII.

Cleopatra, 'daughter of the sun, she who in Egypt bound Cæsar with a wreath of flowers, the queen scorning a Roman triumph (2),' was herself triumphed over by illicit love: yet, with all her errors, she had virtues that extracted encomium from her mortal enemy (3).

P. —— LXIV.

Helen too appears in the assemblage selected to

(1) Justin, ap. Genealogia Deor. Lib. 2. Cap. 60.
(2) Trionfo d' Amore. Cap. 1.
(3) She shall be buried by her Anthony;
No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
A pair so famous. High events as these
Strike those that make them; and their story is
No less in pity, than his glory, which
Brought them to be lamented.
Ant. and Cleop. Act. v. Scene the last.

prepare us for the young Italian couple; Helen — *διᾶ γυναικων* — the goddess of womankind, the Spartan Queen whose resistless beauty made even old Priam exclaim, though prescient of the destruction she was bringing on his house,

. . . no wonder such celestial charms
For nine long years have set the world in arms (1).

When describing her juvenile appearance, previous to her first misadventure with the Prince of Athens, Boccaccio is eloquent. 'Sculptors, aided by the verses of Homer, and by the union of the separate perfections of a multitude of females, endeavoured, but in vain, to form an ideal beauty that could represent her's. Their utmost genius was foiled: for it could not convey the rapture of her glance, the amenity and kindness of her look, her affable, celestial smile, the varying hues of her complexion, the modesty of her words, and the gentleness of her conduct. None of these could be imparted by the heavenly statue made in order to bequeath to posterity a notion of Helen. Poets, attempting a similar task, were obliged to fable her being daughter of Jupiter; hoping, by that super-human expedient, to suggest to their readers' fancy some, however imperfect, conception of the reality of her charms, of the admirable candour of her countenance, of the richness and light texture of her golden tresses falling luxuriantly and gracefully

(1) Pope's Iliad, Book 3.

waving over her milky shoulders, of the soul-soothing tone of her sweet, sonorous voice, of the splendour of her forehead, of the ivory of her neck, and of the delicious roundness of her virginal bosom (1).' Next come Achilles and Paris; names recalling, not only stupendous events in history and the formation of republics and of empires, but, what outlive these, the matchless productions of poetry. To the soft, yet noble Paris is accorded perhaps the finest similitude ever produced by the Muse of Homer, as well as the most spirited specimen of Mr. Pope's translation (2). Dante, by saying Achilles 'fought with love to the last,' alludes not only to the long history of his amorous feats, from his puerile attachment to Deidomia to his passion for Patroclus (which produced an effect that neither patriotism, nor love of glory could), but also, and more particularly, to the manner of his death, when he was shot in the heel while waiting for the Trojan Virgin, Polyxena, by assignation. The amorous impetuosity of Achilles was

(1) Comento, Vol. 1. p. 304.

(2) Forth issues Paris from the palace wall
In brazen arms, whence gleamy lightnings fall.—
The wanton Courser thus, with reins unbound,
Breaks from his stall and beats the trembling ground;
Pampered and proud he seeks the wonted tides,
And laves, in heat of blood, his shining sides,
His head now freed he tosses to the skies,
His mane dishevelled o'er his shoulders flies,
He snuffs the females in the distant plain,
And springs exulting to his fields again.
Pope's Iliad, Book 6.

indeed so remarkable, that some pretend it was to denote it, that the fiction of his having been immersed in Styx entirely except the heel, was first invented (1). I know not, whether any stickler for the Classics may object to the introduction of the hero of the Iliad in this melancholy circle, instead of the Elysium of the former one: but let such recollect the sorrowful plight of that sacred champion in the Odyssey, who is there made to aver that, rather than reign where he was., he would be

"A slave to some poor hind who toils for bread (2)."

Indeed it is not easy to form any notion of Homer's plan of future rewards and punishments; and such no doubt was one reason for Dante's preferring the philosophical Virgil, as his instructor in the creed of Antiquity. The placing of Achilles here maintains that dignity which is intended for Francesca; nor is her state so terrible, nor the punishments of this first circle of Tartarus so severe, as to be derogatory to him.

Q. —— LXVII.

If Dante made a classic selection with regard to the preceding heroes and heroines, he made a fashionable one in designating Tristram of the

(1) Quod thalus immersus non sit, physicum tegit mysterium. Volunt namque physici quod venæ quæ in thalo sunt ad renum et femorum atque virilium rationem pertineant: et ideo per thalum non mersum in Styge, invictam in Achille libidinem voluerunt. Genealogia Deor. Lib. XII. Cap. 52.

(2) Pope's Iliad, Book XI.

Round table; which romance, along with Launcelot of the lake, composed a lady's library in those days. Arthur's chief favourite was the nephew to the king of Cornwall, Tristram; who had the misfortune to become enamoured of his own royal aunt, Ysotta, a fair haired princess of Erin (1), while she played innocently on her harp; and the uncle, finding them thus together, took a fit of jealousy and wounded the youth with a poisoned arrow which he happened to have in his hand; so that he was thereupon carried away to bed: where the aunt coming in to visit him before he expired, they embraced each other with such affection and despair, that both their hearts burst together (2). Petrarch also gives Tristram a place in his Triumph of Love (3). So many illustrious personages force the reader to make a reflection (which the poet artfully omits), that, if so large a proportion of those, whom the world quote as examples of transcendant abilities and greatness of soul, were unequal to the conflict of love, we ought not to judge over-severely of a single fault of a very young

(1) . . . la bionda figliuola del Re d'Irlanda. Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016.

(2) . . . . dopo molto pianto, abbracciandosi insieme per grande passione ed amore, dice la favola che morirono l'una nelle braccie dell'altro — a story (says the manuscript I am quoting) taken from the Chronicle of Mantua. Id. Id. Id. and Boccaccio, Comento, Vol. 1. p. 310.

(3) Ecco quei che le carte empion di sogni
Lancilotto, *Tristano*, e gli altri, ec.
Trionfo d'Amore. p. 99.

couple, whom peculiar circumstances exposed to the most trying temptations.

R. —— LXXIV.

Before proceeding further, it will be well to present the reader with the historical facts on which the poetic description he is about to peruse is founded; because without being perfectly aware of them it will be impossible to appreciate the poetry justly. Should my recital appear prolix, or should the quotations transcribed to support it be judged superfluously numerous, I alledge as an excuse that it is an *oltremontano* who undertakes to investigate a question of Italian antiquities, which is not accurately treated in the Italian editions of Dante, and who not only affirms that on this head all those editions (even not excepting the most voluminous ones) are strangely deficient, but that of the little they state a portion is to be invalidated; and that palpable errors are disseminated in France and England in the most modern publications that profess information on this subject —— the Histoire Litteraire d'Italie, and the 'Story of Rimini'. Mr. Hunt indeed can quote Italian in his favour; and even were it otherwise, he could put in the triumphant plea of the beauty of his little poem: but the French critic has no such defence, and when he sets out by telling us that

Paul and Francesca were cousins (1), he commits a blunder not discoverable in the most negligent copy ever printed of the Divina Commedia, and nearly disheartens one with his book.

Polenta and Malatesta were two feudal Lords, the former of Ravenna and Cervia, and the latter of Rimini; States which, according to the style of the time, were continually at bloody variance. It was on the cessation of one of their longest and most ruinous conflicts, that a union between their two most potent families was projected as the only expedient to insure a peace; which to Ravenna, as having fared the worst in the campaign, was supposed to be very desirable, if not absolutely necessary. But Polenta had another as powerful, though less patriotic reason. His family, though rich, were not ancient, and he was ambitious. His father had come from a small village at the foot of the Appennines; and although he himself had now risen, first to the dignity of Procurator to the Archbishop, and at last to that of Count, he aspired to greater honours. He therefore sought by every means to captivate his fellow-citizens by courteous manners, and to strengthen his reputation abroad by alliances —— in which he succeeded so well, that finally, by the aid of his son-in-law, Malatesta, he expelled the only people who could compete with him, the princely-descended Traversarii, and made

(1) Elle etait tendrement aimée de Paul son jeune cousin. Hist. Litt. d' Italie, Vol. II. p. 45.

himself the absolute master of the city. This he did in 1275 (1). It was I know not exactly how long previously, that the marriage I am about to speak of took place; but it could not be long (2). Polenta long after both the death of his daughter and his own ascent to supreme power in Ravenna, was elected Podestâ, or mayor, in Florence, in 1291 (3). Those who are aware of the strange usances then in Italy, will not be astonished to find one, who was already a little sovereign, come to be an occasional chief Magistrate in that illustrious Republic. In Polenta's case it was doubly convenient; for, while his authority was secured by his adherents at home, his visit to Florence both soothed his townsmen by that appearance of equality (4) and gave him

(1) Per idem tempus (1275) Guido Polentanus (qui per aliquod tempus privatus vixerat civis) subsidio equitum qui sibi missi a Lancellotto *Genero* Arimino fuerant, adversariis civibus, Traversariis præsertim pulsis, Ravenna potitus est. Hier. Rubæi Hist. Raven. p. 308.

(2) Clementini (Racc. Ist. di Rimini, Lib. v. p. 580) dates both the peace between Ravenna and Rimini, the usurpation of Polenta, and Francesca's marriage all in the same year. He deduces this latter from the gratitude which Polenta owed Scanatus for his aid in usurping the supreme power at Ravenna; the literal sense of the Ravannese annalist's words is, that the marriage was to cement the peace and that Scanatus was already Polenta's son-in-law when he assisted him in expelling the Traversarii. But it is easy to reconcile both accounts, by considering the three events as nearly simultaneous and that while making the peace, the marriage and usurpation were concerted and quickly put in execution. Hier. Rubæi Hist. Ravennatum, Lib. 6. p. 308.

(3) Nel 1291 in Calen. di Luglio fu fatto Podestà di Firenze Messer Guido da Polenta di Ravenna. Chron. di P. di Piero, ap. supp. ad Rer. Ital. Scrip. T. 2. p. 45.

(4) He was an assiduous courtier of popularity — facile inter cives primus comitate humanitateque conciliare animos sibi omnorum studens... Hier. Rubæi, Hist. Raven. Lib. VI. p. 309.

an opportunity of conciliating a powerful ally. That Dante then formed an acquaintance with Polenta, which ripened into friendship, is the natural cause for the poet's selecting his roof to expire under; which we know he did. In that last stage of life he retired to the bosom of his friend, like an over-hunted hare to her form; and, if was not given to him to receive the last sad offices of mortality from his own countrymen, he was not unhappy in having them conferred in an affectionate and noble manner by a long-respected friend; and, if he died in exile, it was still in a city not less worthy of him than his native one; for, in antiquity and rank, the habitation of the Ex-archs was only inferior to Rome itself. That Dante heard Francesca's story from Polenta's own mouth as early as their meeting in 1291, and that the Canto was written while the impressions it awakened in the poet were quite fresh, is the probable conjecture; and it corresponds exactly with what I have said of this poem being partly begun as early as the publication of the Vita Nuova (1). It is likely then this Canto was composed in Florence: but, if in Francesca's own room, in Polenta's house, in Ravenna, (as some have advanced, on I know not what ground) it could only be during a transient visit which Dante might have made there as Ambassador or otherwise: but by no means during his rambles

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 114.

as an exile; for Boccaccio's testimony is absolute, that this Canto was written previous to his exile. Polenta had two sons and one daughter, Francesca; on whose beauty, wit, and accomplishments the chronicles of that age descant. Malatesta also had two sons (1) as dissimilar as it is possible to be in their character: Paul, the younger, is represented as being as remarkable for gentleness and personal advantages, as Francesca herself; and they who paint her as uniting the charms of Venus with the virtue, good sense, and education of Minerva, extol him as a rival of Paris in form, and far superior to him in mind; his resemblance to the Trojan Prince however was not circumscribed entirely to exterior qualities, for he also partook something of the same softness of disposition and preference of ease and tranquil occupations to the bustle of ambition (2): but Launcelot Malatesta was one of the most violent ruffians of that violent period, and not only signalized by his ferocity and ignorance, but by his contempt of culture and his bodily deformity; for he was disgustingly negligent in his dress (3) and so lame of one leg, that, if Knights did not combat on horseback, his hobbling gait must have precluded him from indulging in

(1) He had four sons in all — Malatestino, Lancelot, Paul, and another whose name I forget, and who was a man of no note.

(2) Paulus pulcher et politus, et magis otio deditus quam labori. Benvenuti Im. Com. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. T. 1. p. 1029.

(3) . . . era sozzo della persona e sciancato. Boccaccio, Comento, Vol. 1. p. 113.

those martial exercises to which his fierce temper led him; an infirmity that caused the rude man to be usually known by the barbarous nick-name of John Scanatus (1). Some say that that the delicate-minded Paul became enamoured of Francesca only upon making her personal acquaintance after she had become affianced to his brother, Scanatus; whose pride was flattered by the fame of her worth and charms, so he demanded to be her husband previous to beholding her: but what is most probable (because related by the great historian of Ravenna as the current report) is, that Paul had been himself affianced to Francesca; and that when Scanatus came to pay her a ceremonious visit as his intended sister-in-law, he was so much struck by her beauty, that he declared she should be his own wife; and prosecuted his suit with such ferocious energy, that he terrified her reluctant parents into obedience to his will. But in this all agree, that much force and fear were employed; and that she was surrendered unwillingly — not, I mean, against her own will (for she, poor victim! like so many others, was never consulted about her destiny), but against that of her father and mother (2). The Imolese huddles up the story by

(1) Mire claudus Johannes Scanatus, et vir corpore deformis, sed animo ferox. Benvenuti, ut supra.

(2) Sunt qui scribunt matrem *Paulo Franciscam despondisse* et Lancelottum cum Ravennam venisset . . . . . confestim amore illius ardere cœpisse, et cum alia ratione non posset, *per vim et me-*

shortly adding, that a criminal connexion soon took place between Paul and Francesca, and that the irritated husband and brother, informed by a servant of their rendez-vous, surprised them together, and slew them both in the lady's chamber during their assignation (1). Landino and all the later commentators do nothing more than translate this servilely. The Imolese delivered those his lectures on Dante publickly in Bologna, a town near enough to Ravenna and Rimini, for many considerations, of which we are ignorant, to prevent his being over-explicit. Yet his words are the only foundation for the two common charges, that the unfortunate couple

tum impetrasse ut sibi uxor adjungeretur. Hier. Rubæi, Hist. Raven. p. 308. E perchè era uomo potente e terribile *gli fu data più per paura* che per amore. Landino, Comento. p. 34.

(1) His words are simply these — deposito libro pervenerunt ad osculum, et ad cætera, quæ sequuntur. Hæc autem, in brevi, significata Johanni per unum familiarem fuere. Ambos simul in dicta camera, ubi convenerant, mactavit. Com. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. T. 1. p. 1040. At the worst these imply an act of adultery quickly avenged, but not habitual profligacy: yet Rubæus cites Benvenuti as his authority for accusing them of a criminal connexion during *several days*, and Clementini for the most profligate conduct during *many years:* spesso giacevano in un medesimo letto, ma l'abominevole peccato del troppo continuato gioco discoperse l'accosto ed impudico fuoco al marito, il quale, dopo averlo più volte accennato a Francesca, un giorno, trovatoli in letto abbracciati ed addormentati, con un sol colpo di spada ammendue uccise l'anno 1289, come scrive Benvenuti da Imola, ec. Racc. Ist. di Rimini Lib. v. p. 609. The impudico fuoco must have been in the mind of the annalist, or he could never have made such an indecent paraphrase of Benvenuti's few words. It is a glaring instance of literary flippancy. Had Francesca been such, Dante's wondrous delicacy would have been satire.

were caught in adultery, and that they were murdered in Francesca's own room: but both of these assertions are contradicted by two more ancient, and more candid authorities, Boccaccio and the Riccardian M. S. now before me. The former absolutely denies that he had ever been able to discover a single proof of the adultery, beyond what is to be found in Dante's text; and that he verily believes it to be rather a fiction deduced from the interpretation of which that text is possibly susceptible, than that Dante was conscious of their adulterous intercourse, or meant to affirm it: and certainly what Boccaccio could not discover then, it is unreasonable to expect now (1). The M. S. places the scene of their sanguinary catastrophe, not in Francesca's room, but, as it particulary specifies, in a chamber on the floor below it (2). And both books agree in the positive declaration that Francesca's death was no murder, but altogether accidental; and that it was not only involuntary on the part of her husband, but that it gave him pain (3). Now, without laying any stress on the superior credibility merited by Boccaccio, on

(1) Che Francesca dunque si congisse con Paolo, mai io non udii se non quello che l'Autore ne scrive; il che possibile è che così fosse, ma io credo essere quello piuttosto fizion formata sopra quello ch'era possibile ad esser avvenuto, ch'io non credo che l'Autore sapesse che così fosse. Comento Vol. 1. p. 134.

(2) . . . . nella camera che rispondea di sotto. Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016.

(3) . . . avenne quello ch'egli non avrebbe voluto . . . Boccaccio, ut supra . . . . credendo dare a lui, diede alla moglie. M. S. ut supra.

the score of his inhabiting a free city far removed from the intrigues of either Ravenna, or Rimini, it is enough to remark, that the comments of the Imolese, who began their composition in 1375 (1), have much less antiquity than those of Boccaccio, who died that very year (2): and as to the manuscript, its date is still older by thirty-two years (3). The following is the whole statement of the matter according to these two last-named authorities, who generally corroborate, and never contradict each other. The few details which the M. S. Author adds to Boccaccio's recital, are of the self-same complexion with it; and when he varies from it, it is so slightly, and with regard to such minute facts (as at what precise moment Francesca discovered the deception, whether it was during the night by the reflection of a lamp, or in the morning when the ravisher was rising from the bed), that weight is added to both their testimonies, by showing that they had neither communicated with each other, nor drawn their information from precisely the same sources. On the close of hostilities at the commencement of 1275, (as mentioned before) Polenta, pressed by political interests, but above all by the demands of Scanatus, determined on the ill-starred mar-

(1) Bettinelli, Risorgimento, Vol. 1. p. 144.

(2) Il mourut a Certaldo le 21 decembre de 1375. Hist. Litt. d'Italie, Vol. 3. p. 38.

(3) It is dated 1343, as I said before. Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 41.

riage: and maternal sollicitations, that were ineffectual towards deterring him from sacrificing his daughter to state policy, only produced the effect of making him apprehend resistance to his plan: so that the poor mother could not obtain for her child the privilege of choosing between the two brothers. She, with the perspicacity of parental sollicitude, had long wished for the union of her lovely girl with 'Paul the beautiful': for such is the title that designates him in the Riminese annals (1). That she had privately affianced them, is reported by the historian of Ravenna; and even he of Rimini concedes, that she was as much disgusted by the marriage with 'Scanatus the lame (2)' and as desirous of that with 'Paul the beautiful,' as her daughter herself (3). She felt that the one union was almost an outrage upon nature; and that the second was so natural, that it promised felicity to all parties. Nor was the mother the sole person who caused Polenta to foresee the possibility of his matrimonial scheme being thwarted: for several

(1) Vita di Paolo *il bello* — Paolo terzo figliuolo di Malatesta.. per la moltà beltà, leggiadria e dispotezza ch' era in lui, fu cognominato il bello. Clementini, Racc. Ist. di Rimini, Lib. v. p. 608.

(2) John, alias, Launcelot, alias, Guigliotto, alias, Scanatus the lame — mentr' era fanciullo cadendo e debilitata una gamba, o, come altri dicono, per debolezza de' nervi, zoppicava alquanto e venne chiamato sciancato, e di alcuni Lanciotto e Guigliotto ec. Id. Id. p. 580.

(3) Polenta quasi ubligato diedegli in matrimonio Francesca con disgusto di lei e poca soddisfazione della madre, amendue inclinate a Paolo. Id. Id. Id. . . . matrem Paulo Franciscam despondisse. Hier. Rubæi Hist. Ravenn. p. 309.

of his wisest friends and counsellors urged their intimate knowledge of the characters of Francesca and Lancelot (alias Scanatus) as an insurmountable obstacle to their union; 'your daughter' (they added)' is lovely, and high-minded, and will never rest satisfied with such a husband; and certainly, if she come to see him previous to the consummation of the marriage, neither you, nor any one, will be able to bend her to it, and it is too probable that the attempt will end scandalously(1). It was moreover observed, that it would involve him in much greater perplexities, than any that could be incurred by a mere rejection of Scanatus from the beginning, should things be permitted to come to that pass of the ceremony being performed, and the marriage not effectuated after all: for that then the whole family of Rimini would not fail to be highly irritated, and to consider the disappointment as a premeditated insult. These representations however, instead of dissuading Polenta from his purpose, served to make him seek the means of insuring its execution at whatever expense of honor and justice, to say nothing of paternal tenderness. Hence he determined to employ deception against his child; and endeavour to make her a party to her own ruin, by causing

(1) Voi avete male accompagnata questa vostra figliuola, ella è bellissima e di grande anima, non starà contenta di Gianciotto: (M. S. ut supra) e se ella lo vede avantichè il matrimonio sia perfetto, nè voi, nè altri potrà mai fare ch' ella il voglia per marito; e perciò ne potrà seguire scandalo. Boccaccio, ut supra.

the beautiful Paul to court and marry her on the understanding (without her privity) that he was only to be a proxy; and as to the consummation of the rite, it was resolved to effect it by substituting one brother for another on the bridal couch: so accomplished a young Prince, as Paul, could not, it was hoped, miss of achieving the maid's heart, nor a maid so pure, mild and simple, require much management to prevent her from exerting her timid eyes, and recognising her bed-fellow before it should be too late; by which contrivance she would, while believing to espouse Paul, make herself the lawful wife of Scanatus (1). In prosecution of this scheme, Paul came from Rimini with all the pomp and circumstance of feudal Chivalry; and Francesca, looking down from a latticed balcony on the numerous retinue that poured into the Castle-court, and being struck with the appearance of Paul, who shone pre-eminent amid the surrounding glitter, turned to her female attendant, and asked: 'who is that handsome knight on that milk-white courser, with such rich, silver housings, in whose hat waves that lofty, snowy plume, and whose beautiful green mantle is so slashed with gold tissue? See the pennon on his lance, and his silken sash deeply fringed with gold, and its heavy tassels

(1) Messer Guido Polenta volle pure che il parentado andasse inanzi, e come ch' egli s'ordinasse accio ch'ella, buona donna, non rifiutasse il marito, fece venir Polo a sposarla per il fratello; e così, credendosi aver Polo per marito, ebbe Lanciotto. M. Si ut supra.

of gold bullion! who is he?' And she (whether deceiving, or herself deceived, is not said) answered at once: 'it is the Signor Malatesta your ladyship's bride-groom (1).' Hereupon Madonna Francesca became enamoured; and expressed the gratitude and content of her heart at her dearest parents' choice. Indeed when we consider the usual fate of Princesses, and the secluded education given to young ladies in Italy, nothing is more natural than this anecdote: and it is very likely that a cloistered virgin of sixteen should fall deeply in love, on beholding a youth of wondrous comeliness surpassing all of whom she had ever heard, or read, in ballads, novels, or fairy-tales, and realizing even her own pure dreams; to whom she was about to be allowed not only to speak, but whom she was to honor and regard as the future companion of her life. If it requires the sagest guardian to defend the heart of one, like her, young, innocent, replete with hope and fancy, and unconscious of any kind of guile, against the brilliant illusions of existence, what shall be able to control it when that guardian himself not only permits, but prescribes its surrender to a beauteous object pronounced to be of still more sterling, than apparent value, to be still worthier in reality, than in idea? The nuptial ceremony over, it is said that a conversation between the interesting couple made the conquest

(1) Both Boccaccio, and M. S. ut supra.

of her affections irretrievable; but, since it took place in public, nothing transpired to undeceive her. It is said by some that Paul also was as deceived; and the conjecture that he was so, is strengthened by several circumstances, but particularly by that of both he and Scanatus being younger brothers; so that, as long as the claims of primogeniture prevailed, the eldest, Malatestino, was to be Lord of Rimini, and neither of them. Each however was splendidly provided for by their munificent father; so that 'Paul the beautiful,' with all his personal advantages, and acknowledged pretensions, might well have considered his union with the heiress of Ravenna as very natural. That he conceived an ardent attachment to her from the first moment of their meeting, and that she received his soothing attentions during that entire day as the first flattering tribute of connubial tenderness, is certain; and that he too was foully maltreated and, unaware of any procuration, was lulled with the persuasion that he was courting his own bride, is highly probable. Notwithstanding maiden bashfulness, and knighthood's proverbial delicacy, it is not imaginable, that, during the lapse of many hours, with their hands already linked in wedlock, their mutual affection should have been unrevealed, even had no words been tollerated between them: for there are other interpreters of admiration quite as eloquent as words; nor could sighs, or blushes, be condemned by the most fastidious on

an occasion like the present, when a couple already joined by the holiest bonds, were every moment expecting to be left at sacred liberty. Whether their conversation had lieu in Ravenna, or on the road to Rimini (1), is not stated, nor whether it was in this latter that the fraudulent spousals were consummated, or whether the sacrilege was shared between both those towns, nor to what precise extent the brutal ravisher was guilty; but if he was so profoundly implicated in the crime, as to post secretly to Ravenna, and, Tarquin like, take advantage of the obscurity of night, then indeed the diabolical malefaction attained its full complement of horror, and not only the profanation of the marriage-vow, and the awful conspiracy of a father against his own virgin daughter, but even the last of infamies, her rape, was made to violate the sanctity of the paternal roof. Of the Mother's criminality I say nothing; for she was an unwilling instrument in the hands of a relentless, ambition-blinded lord and master: and those who would blame her pliability ought first to reflect on the unlimited power, which, in that age, a feudal sove-

(1) Since writing this article, I have seen the novelle of Giraldo Giraldi; who in substance coincides with most of my relation, because he follows Boccaccio, and because the novella-writers in Italy possess much historical accuracy. Still Giraldi cannot be received when he adds any thing to Boccaccio and cites no authority; so that when he tells us the conversation ensued during the ride to Rimini, to which Francesca went in company with Paul and his escort of Gentlemen, we must take it, not as historical matter of fact, but as sufficiently probable for a novella. Novelle di Giral. Giral. Nov. 3. p. 25. Ed. 1819.

reign had over his family; and on the power a husband will always have over a wife, who (as seems to have been the case in this instance) continues to love him, notwithstanding her disaproval of his conduct. If then the poor mother, in conducting her girl to the nuptial chamber and making her ascend the decorated couch, gave vent to a bitter flood of conscious sorrow, it was not strange Francesca should attribute it exclusively to their approaching separation; and if the maid too trembled, and let fall 'some natural drops,' it is what frequently occurs on similar occasions: but few mothers had ever such real cause to weep; and few brides ever advanced to such a ruinous catastrophe, under the false impression that none ever had her timidity balanced by more exquisite hopes, nor her grief, at parting from those who gave her birth, by the consolation of yielding to such an engaging spouse. . . . . .

. . . . . .

When her eyes re-opened, it was all over: and recognising her loss as utterly irretrievable, she uttered a frantic shriek on descrying, whether, ere dawn, by the light of a taper (1), or, later, by that of the offended sun, the features of him she had embraced, and who was now rising from the bed (2); —— not her charming suitor, not he to

(1) . . . e trovandosi *la sera* allato Gianciotto. M. S. ut supra.
(2) Non s'avvide prima dello inganno, ch' essa vide la *mattina* se-

whom her faith had been pledged upon the altar, where God-like beauty and the solemnity of Religion joined in kindling up her heart and brain, but one of the most loathsome, severe, and deformed of men, and whose base stratagem had just proved his mind to be as ill-fashioned as his body. None but a female can form any adequate conception of the o'er-whelming misery of such a moment, when the brain must be agonized by the simultaneous rush of all the most excruciating feelings of our nature, the past, the future, crushed hopes, everlasting regrets, the sense of remediless disaster, the prospect of an entire life to be consumed in the inseparable fetters of a close junction with a wretch, whom it is criminal not to love and honor yet impossible not to despise and abhor: — for me, I can do no better than follow the reserve of my good old Author, fully convinced, as I am, that no man, whatever calamities may befall him, can ever suffer any blow half so calculated to create despair. 'Madonna' (is the only observation hazarded) 'perceiving herself cheated declined into a state of deep discontent (1).' Her attachment however to the youth who had received her plighted hand, and who was probably, like herself, a victim of duplicity, did not fade; on the contrary, that

guente al dì delle nozze levar da lato a se Gianciotto. Boccaccio, ut supra.

(1) . . . fu male contenta, e vidde ch' ella era stata ingannata. M. S. ut supra.

perillous attachment increased with every effort to stifle it (1). Whether this were the involuntary effect to be predicted, I cannot tell; or whether it would not have been more natural for her to have begun to view the whole of mankind with detestation: but in resolving to struggle with the sentiments of her heart, to resign herself under such irreparable wrongs, and to spurn legal interference, which, even if attainable, would have been only vengeance (not reparation) of an injury not redressed by human power, nor even by Omnipotence himself, unless, as is doubtful, he could change the past (2), and which could not be sought for without bringing eternal disgrace on her family — in determining to make a voluntary sacrifice of the little remnant of her peace of mind, after its main portion had been already irrevocably sacrificed, rather than brand her father as a villain, and plunge her country in war — in submitting to her mate however unworthy, and in undertaking to dedicate the residue of her lingering existence to the duties of a forlorn, but lofty, spotless wife, she formed an idea of the most difficult and exalted virtue. Had her attempt succeeded, she would have been by far the brightest specimen of female heroism that the world ever saw: as it is, who

(1) Non levò l'amore ch' ella avea preso per Paolo, ma crebbe continuatamente. M. S. ut supra.

(2) Hoc namque dumtaxat negatum etiam Deo est, quæ facta sunt infecta posse reddere. Aristotle, de Moribus, Lib. VI.

shall assail her with the first stone? Most elevated was her notion of moral excellence, and admirable and laudable her ambition in aspiring to such perfection; but who shall reproach her for fainting in the ascent, or not rather bewail the frailty of human-nature? For fourteen years (until 1289) her virtue persisted in its glorious career, maintaining an unblemished reputation in a court so full of spies, that, on the first occasion of her trespassing decorum by permitting one single kiss, it was instantly discovered. During that long period, she was exposed to the severest trials human-nature can sustain — the continual presence of a loving and beloved object (one whom a little sophism might have taught her to consider her true husband) and the absence, or neglect of him who was ostensibly her husband, but whose rights would at any legal tribunal have been questionable, and whom not to hate was a mighty exertion of goodness, but whom to cherish, or respect, was above mortal power. And if we reduce her error to the receiving of that one, single, trembling kiss (a stain which her heart-blood quickly washed out) who, while admiring the judgment of the poet, in presenting us with her fictitious shade in hell, will not be induced to alter the award, and trust that the real Francesca is a saint in Paradise? Her husband continually employed in the chase, or in the repelling, or the directing of martial inroads, the society of her beloved brother-in-law became her

principal, or only recreation; their near relationship, and the purity of her soul prevented either of them from foreseeing peril in their attachment; and if the primal dream of love was found by them to be fallacious, a connexion formed upon affinity, and chaste, tender friendship, seemed to repose unshakeably. Reading was their favourite delight; and, since they were not more remarkable for exterior loveliness than for gentle manners, adorned feelings, and the enthusiasm of fine associations, every circumstance conspired to cultivate between them a most high, mental sympathy, which is always infinitely more puissant than that caused by exterior attractions alone. By these too, however, the juvenile couple were distinguished above any others of that age. Their choice of books was in conformity with the reigning fashion and led them to the perusal of the glowing romances of Chivalry: in one of which Launcelot of the lake, in a situation somewhat resembling their own, advances, through all the tremors and colouring of passion, to the boldness of pilfering a kiss from his adored Ginevra; on which Paul, whose nerves were over-come, was unable to refrain from realising the storied rapture, and thus sullied the lips of his brother's consort by touching them with his own. This is not only Dante's account of the transaction, but also the historical truth; and if he attributes to them no deeper guilt, neither do the genuine records either. No doubt however but

such a salute between such relatives was highly wrong; and if I pretended the contrary, I should be totally unworthy of the punctilious moralist, I am commenting, who in another world sentences their misdemeanour, and does not advert to any one of the palliations in their excuse. It suffered on earth condign punishment without delay: for a servant having, through a cranny in the wainscot, witnessed that unguarded act, he hurried to inform his master of it, who was, as usual, absent from home. Scanatus was not of the delicacy to scorn listening to a mercenary tale-bearer, nor of a character to bridle his indignation till the matter was investigated, much less to give way to any self-culpations: so he hurried back to Rimini with his ferocious temper irritated to madness. The servant had only told him what '*he knew to be true,*' viz. that kiss (1); for that these words only imply a kiss, and by no means any thing adulterous, is certain from the very man who uses them, Boccaccio, being the same who, as I have shown already, affirms possitively that he had never heard Francesca accused of adultery. Unfortunately the husband, swelled up to that state of unreflecting violence, was led to the staircase at the very moment that his brother in full dress with the collar of his order of knighthood, and in his mantle and buff coat of mail (2), was entering Francesca's room.

(1) . . . ciò che sapea. Boccaccio ut supra.

(2) He had on his *coretto* (says Boccaccio) which appears to have

The cholerick Prince never considered that such visits were most wonted; and that, if his poor brother had any culpable design, he would never have resorted to it in those distinguished habiliments. No time was allowed to any indiscretion on the present occasion: for scarcely had Paul entered the room, when Scanatus called furiously to his wife to come down; upon which Paul, hearing the angry exclamation, instead of returning, went forward and descended to go away by another flight of stairs. But Scanatus hearing his tread turned into a corridore, so that he met Paul as he landed on the first floor; and when this latter, on beholding the other run towards him with fierce menaces and a drawn sword, sprang to elude if possible rather than wait a fraternal contest, the above mentioned golden collar got entangled with a nail projecting from the door of a draw-well fabricated in the wall —— a curious contrivance to be found in many rooms of old houses in Italy (1). At this

been a kind of rich mantle, for its *falda*, or hem is spoken of. The M. S. describes him as wearing a *tosetto*, which may mean a coat of mail of dressed skin; or a collar, since it mentions its *maglia* or links. Neither *tosetto*, nor *corretto*, however is to be found in the Vocabolario. That Paul was in some kind of a remarkably brilliant full dress is certain.

(1) I here rather follow the M. S. Boccaccio thinks it was down the draw-well itself Paul endeavoured to escape, and that when Francesca opened the door of her room (for it had been bolted) to Scanatus, he saw Paul who in descending had been caught by a nail in the well. But, in the first place, few rooms in old houses in Italy are without a second door through which there is an escape; and then those wells are so narrow that to descend by them is nearly impracticable, and

instant Francesca appeared, and, seeing one brother unarmed and hanging, and the other rushing towards him with a naked weapon, she flung herself between; and struggling with her infuriated lord, who, perfectly out of his senses, struck about him with his blade, one of those random lounges ran both her and Paul through the body. Their death was then direful, but not premeditated; and their slayer was the brutalized personification of jealousy and rage, but no murderer (1). This bloody catastrophe was acted in 1289 —— about two years before Polenta went as Podestà to Florence. Scanatus lost no time in consoling himself with a new wife; and, on her death, married a third within two years after Francesca's tragical end. A son, whom he had by her, died in child-hood: but he left a numerous progeny by his other wives. 'Paul, the

even if it were otherwise, Paul hanging within it would not have been exposed to Scanatus's sword, much less could that sword have passed through him and Francesca at the same time; for to do so, it must also have passed through the wall. The M. S. account then is the more credible. But this slight variance (as well as whether it was by the hem of the *coretto*, or one of the links of the *tosetto* he was caught) is only a proof of the veracity of both writers. For it shows they did not copy each other, although they are perfectly agreed in substance.

(1) Veduto Polo entrare nella camera di Madonna Francesca, fu Gianciotto in quel punto menato all'uscio, e chiamò fuori la donna (Boccaccio ut supra): Polo fu sopraggiunto da lui nella camera che rispondea di sotto; e si sarebbe partito senonchè una maglia del tosetto (la falda del coretto, according to Boccaccio) ch'egli aveva indosso s'appiccò ad una punta d'aguto della cateratta, e rimase così appiccato. Lanciotto gli corse addosso con uno spuntone. La donna entrò nel mezzo, di che menando e credendo dare a lui (avvenne quello ch'egli non avrebbe voluto, says Boccaccio) diede alla moglie ed uccisela, ed amazzò ivi medesimamente Polo dove era impiccato. M. S. ut supra.

beautiful' (who was a widower, though a very juvenile one, when he first saw Francesca) had a son whom his uncle, Scanatus, was suspected of an intention to murder, in order to prevent his avenging his father's death. But the boy escaped, and, in turn, conspired against his uncle. Plots and counter-plots succeeded between the son and the slayer of 'Paul the beautiful;' nor did the nephew ever cease from roving, until the demise of Scanatus, in 1304, permitted him to return home. The palace in Rimini is still pointed out, where the unfortunate lovers are said to have been sacrificed; and they were certainly buried in the Augustine Church in that town; for their bodies were found there three hundred years afterwards, when the silk mantles in which they were wrapt up appeared still quite fresh and brilliant: but some pretend that their slaughter took place at Pesaro, where Scanatus had a castle, from the tower of which their bodies were flung into the sea; although they were soon piously picked up and conveyed to Rimini for interment (1).

If this account be correct (and, I believe, no ques-

(1) Clementini, Racc. Ist. di Rimini. This difference as to whether they were killed at Pesaro, or Rimini, as well as another with regard to the date (for some postpone it as late as 1296, but evidently erroneously), proves there was much mystery endeavoured to be thrown over the whole catastrophe: and as it was clearly the interest of the Malatesti to blacken Francesca's fame, and scarcely of her own family, who had so sacrificed her, to defend it, it is no wonder she was mal-treated by the chroniclers of both Rimini and Ravenna.

tion but it is) the imputation against all the three is much diminished; and not only the luckless lady and her paramour, but even their slayer is to be held still more unfortunate than guilty: so that he, on whom the heaviest load of culpability presses, is the miserable father, Polenta. He however was Dante's intimate friend, and his repentance was so severe, that, it is likely, his state of mind rather challenged commiseration, than reproach: besides, it is Francesca herself that is about to speak, and what daughter shall ever be made reproach her parents? On recapitulating all the circumstances I dare say it will be thought, that, as a display of poetic judgment (in awaking the fullest sympathy for sufferers, without a single reference to the most hateful truths of the tale) nothing can be more perfect than this episode: but as to its pretensions to the grand qualities of composition, I am completely of the opinion of those, who ridicule the vulgar notion of its meriting any thing like the first rank in the Divine Comedy; and who aver that, if *Oltremontani* are more profuse than any Italian in extolling its beauties, it is not because they appreciate them better than a well educated Italian, but because they are ignorant of the numerous beauties of a vastly superior order, with which Italians are familiar in the Purgatory and Paradise —— two canticles, that contain a quantity of poetry incomparably finer, than any thing to be found in this one of Hell (1).

(1) I have said nothing of Peter, or Jacob Alighieri in this Article;

S. —— LXXVIII.

To those readers of the Histoire Littéraire d'Italie who have also perused the late Parisian edition of the Divine Comedy, it will not be necessary to justify a variation from the French version, since a far better authority than mine has already assured them, that it is impossible for words to express the vast portion 'of elegance and suavity' of which M. Ginguené has stripped his original (1): but by such of the above readers as do not possess a thorough knowledge of Dante in his native tongue, I may be accused of great inaccuracy, unless I make it appear that the Critic has been guilty of various mis-interpretations; in noticing which I am guided not certainly by a desire to blame him, but to vindicate myself. In the present passage he translates *per quell' amor ch' ei mena, au nom de cet amour qui les conduit;* as if *mena* was here simply synonimous with *conduce*, which it is not. The verb *menare* is given in the *Vocabulary* nearly 40 significations, many of which convey sense of infliction; it often means *percuotere*, for which several authorities are cited, as 'they struck each other with such fury that they both died'. The context (but parti-

because neither of them seem to have known much about either Francesca, or 'Paul the beautiful'. So, in this instance, their comments are meagre and most unsatisfactory.

(1) Il Sig. Ginguené ha tradotto questo luogo per intero; ma di quanta grazia e soavità l'abbia scemato non si può dire. Biagioli. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 108.

cular what follows) proves sufficiently, that it is in this latter sense that *mena* is here employed; and its union with the word *amor*, and the manner of its introduction produce a very complex imagery, which no two or three words in either English or French can render(1). It is indeed the beginning of an exquisite counterpoise of pain and pleasure, which confers the chief charm on the whole of this episode; and makes the agony of severe sufferings, with the despairing reflection that they were produced by one beloved, and that they shall never end, be in continual contest with the consolatory circumstance of suffering in company with that beloved one, of finding him a faithful companion even in such extreme of misery, and the certainty that he will continue to remain so throughout all eternity. If this complexity of feelings (which is beyond doubt implied by the text, amor ch' ei mena, and nowise retained by amour qui les conduit) be tolerably well suggested by my 'undying fondness which drew them to their ruin and of which they shall never be rid,' I believe small apology is requisite for the slight paraphrase. It is the author's *thought* that is the first object; hence it may sometimes occur, that a translator's mere verbal exactitude is of little moment, since the *implied meaning* may evaporate in spite of rigo-

(1) Si inimichivolmente si *menarono* che amendue rimasero morti. Vocabolario, §. II. Mr. Cary's "love which *carries* them along" is as deficient as the French version.

rous, literal fidelity. *Desio*, v. LXXXII. means the desire of parent-doves to return to their young, not sexual desire; which last were at least an ill-assorted idea on this occasion, and one very little in the spirit of Dante. For the pair of doves are to be supposed flying together, as Paul and Francesca are; and there therefore can be no reason why they should burn with desire to return to their nest, if it was only to coo and bill, an indulgence that might be gratified any where. I have thought it necessary in my translation to mark this peculiar signification; fearing that if I had construed *desio* quite literally *desire*, my readers might be led into error, since *desire* in English frequently awakens a less pure notion than *desio* in Italian: and I was the more engaged to make this remark, by M. Ginguené's French, which (at least in my apprehension) incurs something of the mistake adverted to, by rendering *desio, désir,* — telle que deux colombes excitées par le désir (1). L'affettuoso grido in verse LXXXVII, ('my dear behest') alludes to amor ch'ei mena (their mutual love, by which they had been conjured); for Dante following Virgil's direction is to be understood as having repeated those words of conjuration, although the repetition is not made verbally in the text; and it is only after having repeated them that he adds, O anime affanate! ('Yea! victims!') It is not then

(1) Mr. Cary's "by fond desire invited" is less exceptionable; yet, in as much as it may be referred to sexual desire, it is wrong.

any thing in the sound of his voice (le son de ma voix) that attracts the couple; but the spell of love by which they are sued: so, it appears that this is a fresh instance of Mr. Ginguené's inaccuracy.

T. —— XCIX.

The Po, which falls into the Adriatic not far from Ravenna, is fed with above twenty streams between Turin and Ponte-di-lago-scuro. There is in the text a trait which I endeavour to retain by the word *beset* (1); and which is not at all to be discovered in Ginguené's version, où le Po descend pour s'y reposer avec les fleuves qui le suivent; nor indeed in Mr. Cary's "To rest in Ocean with his sequent streams:" for per aver pace coi seguaci suoi does not mean to repose with his pursuers, but to be at peace with them; or, as a late comment well interprets it, 'to be no longer disquieted by the minor rivers which pursue him, chase him, and drive him along (2). The verse XCVI ——

While hushed, as now, lies every wind ——

is from Virgil

. . . . . omnes
(Aspice) ventosi ceciderunt murmuris auræ (3).

(1) The placid main, which sheltereth Po
When by his rapid rills beset.

(2) Cioè scarica in mare le sue acque, per non essere più inquietato dai minori fiumi suoi, che seguendolo lo incalzano e lo sospingono. Poggiali. Ed. Livorno, 1807. Vol. 3. p. 71.

(3) Ecloga IX. v. 57.

I strive to be very literal in my translation; and since one of the chief characteristics of my Author is concision, I refrain from adding a single syllable except in a few instances where, without doing so, I should have been unable to convey his full meaning. The tiercet beginning at verse c. is rendered almost word for word; and if the translation be obscure, it is not more so than the original. Francesca says, that love, which kindles (1) quickly in gentle hearts, made Paul enamoured of the beautiful form which had been reft from her in a manner on which she cannot even yet think without pain, viz. on the barbarous catastrophe already recounted p. 314. Love that exempts no beloved one from loving ("we love him because he first loved us" says the Gospel (2)) so strongly enamoured me with his rapture, that behold I am not yet abandoned by him, or it. It say *him* or *it*, because it may be disputed which is the nominative case to *abbandona*, whether piacer, or costui, (that is Paul) or amor. The meaning however is nearly the same: I have attempted to preserve the meaning and likewise something of that slight want of precision; for my '*How faithful*' may be referred either to *love* or to *him*. But to enter into the beauties of

(1) *S' apprende* means precisely *kindle* (see Vocabolario, §. IV.) so that Mr. Cary's "love that in gentle hearts is quickly *learnt*" conveys nothing of the metaphor. Yet *s'apprendere* in the sense of *catching fire* is common in Italian; as, *un fuoco s'apprese* in casa.

Love kindling quick where gentle hearts are met.

(2) I. Iohn. C. IV. v. 19.

the whole of this exquisite passage, it would be necessary to hear it well recited; for capable, as it is, of producing a high dramatical effect, half its colours fade under a common perusal; and if its brief indications and passionate bursts are not aided by a corresponding variation of voice and features, and the verbal breaches filled up by Pantomime, there remains no cue to the rapid succession of opposite feelings; so that, that which would cause great emotion on the stage, becomes a rhapsodical medley. Had I not heard it declaimed by an excellent Actor, I should never have been able to penetrate its true spirit: for none have commented it with reference to its recital; although such a memoir would be both instructive and agreeable. Francesca's transitions from sorrowful complacency to horror at her ignominous death, and from melancholy satisfaction at the constancy of her love and lover to the common destruction which that love brought both upon herself and him, followed by a short denunciation of the deeper damnation awaiting their slayer; — then the long silence until Virgil asks his pupil on what he was thinking; and this latter's abrupt exclamation, and his subsequent address to Francesca; who replies in a style more than ever expressive of an internal war of feelings, of sorrow, regret, contrition, disdain, satisfaction, and almost delight; her dwelling, in ten verses, on the theme of her love, with such a sense of bitterly alloyed plea-

sure, as shows clearly it is her ruling sentiment even in hell; her anew referring to the secure possession of her lover; and, after just touching the climax of joy and pathos, her recurring to the consciousness of her error; and pronouncing a malediction on the book and writer who so far misled her and her companion; and, in fine, her closing with that broken trope, which, however it be interpreted, will, I believe, continue to imply more meaning than an equal given number of syllables discoverable throughout the entire range of poetry, ancient, or modern: —— to render quite discernible all these various hues of passion, a masterly tragedian is as necessary, as in a soliloquy of Shakespere's (1). It is the mournful complacency, with which Francesca dwells on the eternity of her union with Paul, that forms the vital principle of the interest she excites: and without this vivida vis animi, this buoyancy and unconquerableness of her spirit, I do not conceive it were possible to make her maintain dignity and strength of character, without which it is vain to attempt to awaken deep commotion. Yet this consideration is so overlooked by some interpreters, that they make it a part, not of her consolation, but of her suffering

(1) The first line of the tiercet is prettily paraphrased by Lord Surrey:

I know how love doth rage
Upon a yielden mind;
How small a net may take and mesh
A heart of gentle kind.

and despair, that she can never be separated from Paul. Boccaccio however, who almost always penetrated his Author's sense with the sagacity of congenial genius, was fully aware of the necessity of understanding the matter as I do (1); and he moreover adds that it appears to be an imitation of Dido and Sicchæus, whose affections are mutual and equal among the shades ——

Respondet curis æquatque Sicchæus amorem (2).

U. —— CXII.

M. Ginguené and the other translators with whom I am acquainted interpolate a *lui*, or something equivalent (as Mr. Cary's "I, in answer") words that are, I believe, directly in opposition with the spirit of the original: for they make Dante *reply unto Virgil*, although there is no such thing in the text. It is, on the contrary, very observable, that Dante, who generally repeats methodically 'and *I to him*,' or something of the kind, expresses himself on the present occasion in a mode that testifies the propriety of understanding what first he utters as a simple soliloquy, to which succeeds his address to Francesca. Quando risposi, cominciai is the Italian —— 'when I answered, I began;' viz. I began to exclaim to myself: for otherwise our attention would be directed to Virgil by risposi

(1) Puoi comprendere ch' io l' amo come l'amai mentre vivevamo. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 318.

(2) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 74.

a lui, in Dante's usual manner. It is certainly a beauty, that a pupil, almost always so prompt in answering his revered Conductor, is now absorbed to such a degree by his own melancholy reflections, that he gives no answer whatever to his question; but, pursuing his own train of feelings, bursts out with the exclamation O lasso ec. 'Alas! etc.' and, after that, turns again to the pair of lovers. This remark, made to me by the chief Italian poet of this day, the Chevalier Monti, I thought so just, that in order to direct the reader's attention to it more forcibly (and particularly by reason of his having been perhaps already misled by other translations) I took the liberty of inserting a syllable and changed 'And, answering, I began' into 'And I, in answer's lieu;' as it at present stands.

W. —— CXX.

Dubbiosi desiri, 'dubious desires,' is the original; and the absolute signification of the tiercet is, how did you become conscious of your mutual desires (1)? —— for a couple so young and pure might have long continued in their situation without making the dangerous discovery; and previous to the making of it their desires must have been full of doubt, because they were not known to each other. But this naked meaning is veiled in an

(1) A perilous knowledge, says the old commentator, Buti; for were people conscious of each others wishes, all shame would be banished from the earth. Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1006.

exquisite poetry, of which there is really little or no vestige in M. Ginguené's version. 'In the season of sweet sighs' is the original, and it means in the spring of life: so that to interpolate *your*, as that Gentleman and Mr. Cary do, is to injure the image by obliterating its generalization. The Italian calls our attention to the tender years of the couple; but dans le temps *de vos* doux soupirs, as well as "in the time of *your* sweet sighs," are words applicable to lovers at any age. *Concedette* implies a reproach that is very touching; as if it were both strange and cruel in Love to permit two so dear to acquire the terrible knowledge of each other's secret wishes. For to a fanciful mind this epithet *dubious* applied to desires, is nearly akin with that of *uncertain* applied by Virgil to the moon; and both, besides their primary and obvious signification, suggest another, of treachery and peril. That these criticisms penetrate the spirit of my Author, I trust; whether my verses have succeeded in conveying it, is a very different thing; my confidence of the former nearly equals my diffidence of the latter.

X. —— CXXII.

This imitates Virgil ——

Infandum, Regina, jubes renovare dolorem (1);

but literally translates Boëtius —— in omni adversitate fortunæ, infelicissimum genus est infortunii

(1) Aeneid. Lib. II. v. 3.

fuisse felicem (1). This latter book, along with Tully, was Dante's first solace after Beatrice's death, as he tells us himself in the Convito. 'After I had lost the early delight of my soul, I remained long in a state of desolation that nothing could alleviate. At last however my understanding, admitting the possibility of a cure, engaged me to recur to those topics of consolation, which had been found useful to others in their woes; and so I applied myself to the reading of the volume (not known to many) which Boëtius composed to assuage the suffering of his captivity and exile; and learning that Tully, in his treatise on Friendship, wrote to condole with good Lelius on the death of his friend, Scipio, I began to read that also. And although I found it rather difficult at first to enter entirely into the spirit of those compositions, nevertheless, what with the grammatical lore I had acquired, and what with some little genius of my own, I became imbued with their thought, and had, as it were in a dream of the fancy, a succession of visions as may be seen in the Vita Nuova (2). These last expressions show, that those commentators who describe the book of Boëtius as being first resorted to by Dante for consolation in his exile, have made a mistake: for he had been familiar with it, from the period of the decease of 'the earliest delight of his soul,' Beatrice, and before he had finished

(1) De Consol. Lib. 2. Cap. 4.
(2) Convito, p. 95.

composing his Vita Nuova; that is, before the close of his twenty-sixth year, in 1291, — or ten years previous to his exile (1). This tract of Boëtius, which was little noticed in Dante's age, is less so now: it has however been in great fashion at different times, and not unfrequently been even a royal manual; James I, of Scotland, read it in the Tower of London; Alfred turned it into Saxon, and queen Elisabeth into English (2). The tiercet that immediately follows is an imitation of Virgil:

Sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros,

. . . . . .

Quanquam animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit,
Incipiam (3). . . . . .

and, notwithstanding what is borrowed from Boëtius, the title Dottore naturally refers to Virgil, for several reasons, but particulary because he was there present, so that Francesca pointed to him while she spoke.

V. — CXXXVII.

They were reading Launcelot of the lake, (as I said before) a romance in which the hero finds himself with the fair Ginevra and kisses her. There was a confidant on the occasion; whose name, Galeotto, became so synonimous with that

(1) Hell. Comment, Canto II. p. 114—133.
(2) Hume. Hist. Vol. 1. p. 130. — Boetii op. omnia, p. 902. fog. Basil. 1570.
(3) Aeneid. Lib. II. v. 10.

of an abettor of illicit amours, that, the early editions of the Decameron were inscribed PRINCE GALEOTTO in the title-page, in order to warn the reader of their sensual tendency. This is the reason that Francesca calls both the Romance that misled them and its author, *Galeotto;* that is to say, *impure* and *false:* M. Ginguené does not preserve this idea of culpability, for he construes *Galeotto messagers d'amour*. Neither is he happy in rendering *disiato riso;* besides which, he does not give '*all* trembling;' but what would have most merited M. Biagioli's severity is the converting of la bocca mi baciò into il *colla* sur mes levres sa bouche: for surely nothing can be worse adapted to express the first fluttering kiss of timid love than the word *coller*. How wide is it from Boccaccio's observation: 'excellently doth our Author paint the mode of proceeding among such as love fervently; for these, whatever be the favours offered them, can never without trembling cull them for the first time (1). *Disiato riso* seems taken from Catullus' desiderio meo nitenti — words rendered by the scholiast 'my beautiful girl (2):' and perhaps the discolouring of their cheeks, *scolorocci il viso*, from Sapho, or the Latin of Longinus. If Dante truly had Longinus in his memory *all trembling* may have come from the same

(1) Comento, Vol. 1. p. 321.

(2) . . . *puellæ meæ formosæ*. *Desiderium* vocatur puella cujus desiderio amator flagrat. Carm. 2. ex recen. Dœring.

sublime source (1). After what I have said in my Preface, I refrain from ever noticing M. Cary's translation excepting where I find it *literally* defective; yet on this one occasion, it may be allowed me, in justice to my Author, to regret that it is possible for much *literal exactness* to co-exist with so complete a dearth of the *spirit* and *melody* of the original. Yet even *literally*, he is not more happy than M. Ginguené in translating *Galeotto*, "love's purveyors." Once more we here find Francesca repeating with complacency that her companion will never leave her: piteous then is it to behold a late commentator labouring to spoil this charming poetry by making this constancy of Paul be an increase of their punishment (2), and not a consolation; as if his faithful presence were like that of an ever-tormenting fiend, instead of being, as it truly is, a sweet, soothing circumstance that sheds enchantment over the entire passage.

Z. —— CXXXVIII.

This is that closing line of Francesca's speech to which I already alluded, as most delicate and sublime: sublime, from the multitudinous imagery

(1) . . . . . tremorque
Occupat totam; velut herba pallent
Ora. De Sublimitate, Sect. x.

(2) Questo che ormai in eterno, *per sua e mia maggiore pena*, dovrà essermi indivisibil compagno. Poggiali, Ed. Livorno, 1807. Vol. 3. p. 74.

it suggests of all her woes, and joys, and errors (to whatever extent we choose to draw these last); and delicate to such a degree, that, if it be true that they imply the glowing crime of adultery, it may most fairly be asserted, that never, before, or since, was an iniquitous idea conveyed in sounds so free from any thing that could be considered unbecoming of a lady's, or even of a seraph's lip. Aquino in his Latin version has paraphrased them prettily enough:

Distulimus post hæc sontes evolverè chartas;
Sontes? —— heu miseram! gravius nocuere remotæ.

It is displeasing to criticise details of a production which we unaffectedly admire as a whole: still I will not permit myself to conceal my opinion of Mr. Hunt's miscarriage in the imitation of this verse:

"The world was all forgot, the struggle o'er,
"Desperate the joy —— that day we read no more."

Now in this way there is no longer the least inuendo: 'that day we read no more' is certainly verbally an accurate translation; but what information does it convey? The original is pregnant with information: so much so, that, besides its obvious allusion to scenes of blood and distress, many consider it as so eloquent that it affords a sufficient proof of actual adultery; although totally unsupported by any other testimony, as we have seen Boccaccio affirms. The preceding parts of Mr. Hunt's couplet disclose in flaming terms all that

was to be learnt; and therefore this its close retains neither the delicacy nor the sublimity of the Italian text. It is the effect of the transposition: for in the DIVINE COMEDY the same expressions are full of mystery, but placed, as they are in the STORY OF RIMINI, after all mystery is removed, they add nothing to the sense of the passage, and almost appear to be halting up for the sole purpose of filling a vacancy in the measure. The feebleness of Mr. Cary's translation here proceeds from its *verbal* infidelity: for he interpolates "*in its leaves,*" which gives the line a verbosity quite in contrast with the characteristic simplicity of the text (1). M. Ginguené succeeds better, for he follows it verbatim, ce jour-là nous n'en lumes pas davantage.

This (I repeat) is the verse which Boccaccio asserts to be the only foundation whereon the accusation of adultery against Francesca rests; and which he thinks insufficient to prove either that she was guilty of such a crime, or that Dante thought so. And, fairly weighed, does it indeed imply any such enormity? The answer ought not to be influenced by the circumstance of the poet's putting them here in Tartarus, or the hell-of-the-damned; for an impure thought, much more a

(1) . . . . . "In its leaves
That day we read no more."....
That day we did not read it more — is the original, word for word.

criminal kiss, is denounced by the Roman Church as a mortal transgression, if unrepented of; so that our Author, not making them repent, might place them in their actual situation without any idea of branding them with an incestuous adultery. To whatever slight extent they erred, their death was the consequence of that error; and this is quite enough to render the line infinitely affecting, without condemning the brother and sister-in-law beyond what can be established by history. It may be inquired, how one so rigorous as Dante in proportioning penalties to faults could consign the pair to Tartarus for such a venial misdemeanor as a kiss; because, although the real guilt of that, as well as of every transgression, even the most heinous, depends less upon the act itself, than upon the mental disposition of the actor, yet of this internal disposition in another no one can have knowledge; so that if a poet, for example sake, is permitted to make awards on appearances, he is bound to use that permission in an exemplary manner, and not to present us with sentences that appear harsh. But (first remarking that the lovers, though within Tartarus, are in the uppermost, and therefore least severe circle of it, and that they are even accompanied by Achilles and other glorious personages) the question may fairly be retorted by another, — where else could he have placed them? Not in any other part of his hell certainly. In its vestibule would have been

ignominious: Elysium has nothing in common with them as Christians: a lower circle would have been worse. In Purgatory? But that were to strip them of what confers their chief poetic dignity, *constancy;* for the tenants of Purgatory are *repentant* sinners. In Paradise? But that were to deprive them of our pity; for no such feeling can be excited by the blissful Saints in Paradise. It follows that he had no choice, and that he must have placed them in this identical circle of hell, or rejected altogether the idea of uniting inseparably the name of *Francesca da Rimini* with some of the holiest of mortal emotions —— admiration, sympathy, and pity. Dante, aware that his readers would receive his judgments, not as beyond appeal, but as quite fanciful, hoped probably to engage them to question the propriety of blaming so sternly his friend's youthful daughter; and to doubt whether, on finding her error circumscribed to a single kiss, that kiss could have been received by her with that entire consciousness which alone could render it highly guilty; or whether the shedding of her life-blood was not, in truth, a perfect reparation of that her lenient offence. Dante by this even inculcates an additional moral; for he keeps us in mind of deeds being to be estimated by (what is beyond the poet's power to descry) the interior of the doer; and thus habituates us to weigh the poet's decisions, and not hesitate to reverse them, whenever they appear unsatisfactory

to ourselves: and indeed there may be something herein intended as an imitation of Virgil, who teaches the same moral (although in a different manner) by putting a most notorious unnatural adultress, Pasiphae, not in the region appropriated to such flagitious criminals, Tartarus (1), but in one of the purgatorial circles of his hell (2). If Dante believed Francesca's error to have *exceeded* that witless kiss, no one can blame him of overseverity; since his expressions are so studied that they are as capable of an interpretation that exculpates, as of one that condemns her. If he thought it had been truly *limited* to a kiss, it remains to see, whether the public was also of his opinion, or not. If it was, then the above reasoning applies, and he must have written in the expectation that it would have dissented from his sentence, however it admired his poetry: if it on the contrary had already condemned her far beyond the truth, and stained her reputation with that jaundice-hue which scarcely admits of cure, then his mode of defending her was perhaps the only one likely to benefit her memory. Scandal that no opposition can control, may be soothed into silence; this Dante knew, and he moreover knew that facts of the nature advanced against his fair client are not

(1) Hic thalamum invasit natæ vetitosque hymeneos:
Quique ob adulterium cæsi.
Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 612.—623.

(2) Cernit . . . Evadnenque et Pasiphaen. Id. v. 447.

only difficult to prove, but impossible to refute. On these accounts, he might have preferred to making a formal defence, the appealing to our compassion in such a forcible manner, that no feeling mind should ever consent to her condemnation, but on the clearest proofs; so that, upon no such being discoverable, she should, by the consent of the kindest (that is most respectable and virtuous) portion of society, be acquitted of the charges against her, and be deplored, and cherished as an honourable, abused lady. I am sensible of having dwelt on this matter with an earnestness that may appear exaggerated, considering the remoteness of the events; but if my remarks clear an inimitable poet from the reproach of not having performed the solemn duties of friendship as he ought, I seek for no other excuse. The last verse of the Canto in Italian is cited as very imitative of what it speaks of, the falling of a corpse (1): an attempt to produce the same effect may perhaps be perceptible in my translation.

(1) Questo verso dipinge, non solo per le parole, ma pei numeri e piedi ond'è composto. Biagioli Comento, Vol. 1. p. 115.

COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE SIXTH.

A. —— 1.

On recovering from 'the swoon of mortal pity' excited by the recital of Francesca, Dante finds himself within the third circle of Hell. Here intemperance (one of the most ruinous crimes in a Commonwealth) is punished by deluges of rain that flagellate and beat down the sufferers into the mire; while the three-headed dog of hell deafens them with his barking. Amongst them lies a Florentine gentleman, who enters into conversation with Dante on the civil discord of their native city and predicts the violent misdemeanors of the rival factions that divide it. After his relapse into the mire, the pupil and master indulge in discourse between themselves, and at last step down into the fourth circle; and so the Canto closes. This third circle, like the second, is without any division; and presents, like it, a circular walk 17 ½ miles broad, with a wall 14 miles high on the one hand, and on the other the wide mouth of the central pit leading down into the heart of Tartarus (1).

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto v. p. 273.

I have said that intemperance and luxury are ruinous to a Commonwealth: but, in justice to Dante's political prescience, I should add that this is not only a position that will be generally found correct, but that in the present case it was verified by the event with very peculiar force; for the modern Tuscans recognise luxury as the primary cause of the downfal of Florence; and (in the words of Davanzati) as being 'untempered poison to the life-springs of her who had been founded by parsimony and industry (1).' But such opinions seem declamatory in this our age, which boasts of having discarded so many prejudices, and, which, dignifying 'gastronomia' with a classical name, seems disposed to rank it among the polite sciences. Its advocates contend that it was in honor in every civilized country; that its progress was ever co-eval with mental education; that it has always most triumphed while letters flourished most; and in fine that it has invariably attended on wealth and empire. Nothing could afford a more elaborate justification of the stern denunciation of the elder Cato: for it is impossible to perceive how the mind can be truly elevated by letters, if they tend to nourish those propensities which we possess in common with the brute creation. Literary attaiments were far worse than useless!, if they lead to the undermining of the hardy virtues, they pretend to recommend; and it is frequently a great-

(1) Tacito Volg. Annal. Lib. 2. post. 38.

ter evil to misdirect and sensualize our ethereal particle, than it would be to extinguish it altogether if such were possible. But the whole defence is sophism; luxury, far from advancing literature, or empire, has always been an infallible symptom of the decline of both. It is a vice that has often broken down freedom, wealth and power, which boldness and frugality had first reared; but it never contributed to their begetting: and though it has sometimes existed during epochs distinguished for much erudition and brilliant taste (as in Rome under Augustus, and under Louis the fourteenth in France) yet it has never been coeval with the highest genius in any department of art or science, with those rare prodigies of intellect that astonish and most ennoble human-nature; and it has hardly once failed to be a sure indication of the utter extinction of the sublimest and most beneficial portion of philosophy, ethics. If Dante felt this as a philosopher, he did so doubly as a good republican; and when he recollected the black broth of Sparta, the scanty repast of a Roman Consul, or even the simple manners of his own progenitors (which we shall hear him describe), he could not but deplore the increase of luxury in Florence, and regard it as a fatal augury to freedom. It is luxury, or intemperance, in the most general sense, that is to be understood as punished in this circle; and not merely the being what is vulgarly called a glutton. For it is in the

Scriptural sense we are to receive this word, gluttony; and then it signifies much more those who delight in delicate living, than such as exceed in the quota of what they devour; it is the former who make a God of their belly; and mere voracity of stomach can rarely be dangerous to individuals, and never to the State. Dante follows the phraseology of his Church; which, including various costly trappings of life in a single word, stigmatises undue indulgence in all, or any, of them as being comprised in that one of the seven deadly sins, gluttony. It is curious to consider how many philosophers and legislators (though disagreeing in other points) agree in this of employing regulations about food, as the means of restraining the inordinate passions of man. Such restraints seem superfluous. This however was not the opinion of some of the wisest individuals of our species: so that we find almost all the leading religions of the world, Pythagoreans, Magi, Mahometans, Jews, Catholics, prescribing fasts and prohibiting certain meats and beverages. This uniformity of legislation argues some powerful and uniform principle with which the laws had to contend: and we discover it in the tendency which individuals, and therefore nations, have to slide on from pleasure to excess; until what was despised becoming desired, and superfluities becoming necessaries, the mind is brought down from her 'pride of place' to a base subserviency to the body; whence both body and

mind become rapidly weakened, and, mutually destroying each other, are at length rendered utterly incapable of any thing heroic either in action or in sentiment. It has been the fate of the most renowned States. Yet how little contents nature! It is our unnatural passions that are insatiable: and as these gather strength from indulgence, the votary of Circe is, by a second transformation, turned into a malefactor. Hence our poet does not find in this circle, as he expected, those whom he knew as luxurious characters on earth; but learns that they are occupants of 'deeper, direr dens' as having committed crimes of much greater malignity. One unfortunate, Florentine gentleman is an exception; and he (though he may regard his escape from worse wickedness and pangs as lucky, and the tears with which Dante honours him as a compliment) is in a sorry plight. He had been an amiable, boon companion; and he is selected on this occasion, to show that the misdemeanor in question, besides that it usually leads to the deadliest vices, is in itself so hateful to Providence, that a course of jollity and banqueting (even when not followed by more criminal disorders) is sure to conduct to abjection and misery. It is hard to say whether intemperance be more infamous, or more perilous: — envy may spring from lofty conceptions, and even avarice from a desire of riches as instrumental of something great; but there is little or nothing to pal-

liate the infamy of intemperance: and when men are reduced by it to the level of brutes they usually sink below them, and hurry from the licentious board into outrageous guilt and peril, civil anarchy, murder, atheism. The picture drawn by Boccaccio of the profligate intemperance of Florence, if it be in the least correct (as I presume there is no doubt but it is, since it was composed to be exhibited to the Florentines themselves), proves both that Dante's remonstrances were as unattended to as those of Cassandra, and portends the fast dissolution of the corrupt republic. 'Here' (cries Boccaccio) 'are to be seen suppers consisting of luxuries drawn from the most distant countries; on the same table fish from the Atlantic Ocean, and from the Red sea, and wildfowl brought from beyond the Alps; so that the repasts of our private citizens far surpass those known at any court in Europe, not excepting even that of the Emperor's or the Pope's. That those feasts always end in drunkenness and riot, is bad; but a much worse evil is, that such festive hours are selected for consulting about the weightiest affairs of the Commonwealth. Thus these are too often decided on by men out of their senses; as the world may surmise from the measures it sees adopted and their consequences (1).' If the last Canto was written partly, or perhaps principally, through mo-

(1) Comento, Vol. 1. p. 372.

tives of private friendship, this one and all those that are to follow spring from genuine patriotism and love of justice. But luxury and intemperance were not to be checked; in a few years Florence annihilated her aristocracy, and, instead of nobles and commoners, she became divided into the bribed and the bribers; on the money-market, not the field of battle, the Tuscans henceforth calculated for power and protection; so that the time came, when a merchant becoming master of the money-market, bought and sold them all at pleasure.

B. —— XVIII.

Cerberus hæc ingens latratu regna trifauci
Personat, adverso recubans immanis in antro.
Cui vates, horrere videns jam colla colubris,
Melle soporatam et medicatis frugibus offam
Objicit: ille, fame rabidâ tria guttura pandens,
Corripit objectam (1).

It is unnecessary to remark more on this introduction of the Virgilian Cerberus, than that Dante gives it a somewhat less definite shape; by which it is rendered fitter for admittance as an allegorical demon into a Christian poem. In the Aeneid, the hell-dog is a watch; here, he is rather a tormenting fiend: in the former, his *watchfulness* is the quality that is most dwelt upon; in the latter, it is his cruel *voracity*.

(1) Aeneid, Lib. VI. v. 417.

C. —— XXII.

Il gran vermo, 'the huge worm' is Scriptural; and is introduced again by Dante in his translation of the sixth psalm 'defend me, O Lord, from the huge worm! (1)' Some may consider this expression taken from *Alberic's vision*, a monkish rhapsody ridiculously extolled as the origin of the Divine Comedy; for that Dante had perused it may be true, (although there is no testimony proving any such thing) but that he could have gleaned any useful hints from that unreadable foolery, will not, I am sure, be allowed by any reasonable man who examines it. The passage to which I just now allude, is indeed the only tolerable one in it: 'at the entrence of hell I beheld a worm of infinite magnitude tied by a mighty chain, and it seemed that, that chain was fastened to another head within-side of hell. And before the mouth of the worm stood a multitude of souls, all of whom were sucked in like so many flies when he inhaled his breath; and when he breathed from him, they rushed out again half-burned, like a shower of sparks. By this penalty are fulfilled the words of

(1) Defendimi, o Signor, dallo *gran Vermo*. p. 19. Shakespere uses the word twice as synonimous with serpent—"The mortal *worm* might make the sleep eternal". (Henry VI. Part. 2. Act. 3. v. 467) "Hast thou the pretty *worm* of Nilus here?" (Ant. and Cleop. Act. 5. v. 376)—"*worm*" (says Johnson, Com. to Id.) "is the Teutonic for serpent, and the Norwegians call a huge monster sometimes seen in the nothern sea, the *sea worm*."

the Prophet, "their worm shall never die and their fire shall never be extinguished (1)." As for this Vision, it is so absurd that it could have only excited a feeling of contempt in Dante, had he seen it (2). The 'spasms' of Cerberus (thus expressed in the Italian, non avea membro che tenesse fermo) engage me to remark that in the translation of the above-mentioned psalm Dante repeats nearly the same verse, and, in order to do so, quits the Vulgate and adopting the original Hebrew version, writes

Non ho osso
Che conturbato possa omai star fermo (3).

The throwing of 'lumps of sordid soil' into the hellish monster's throat is more appropriate than Virgil's soporific cake; the more so, because they, who were journeying under the guidance of Pro-

(1) Juxta infernum vermis erat infinitæ magnitudinis ligatus maximâ catenâ, cujus catena alterum caput in inferno ligatum esse videbatur. Ante os ipsius vermis animarum stabat multitudo, quas omnes quasi muscas simul absorbebat, ita ut cum flatum traheret omnes simul deglutiret; cum flatum emitteret omnes in favillarum modum reliceret exustas... Impleturque sermo Propheticus, Vermis eorum non morietur et ignis non extinguetur. Fra: Alberici Visio. cap. 9.

(2) Nothing so disproportioned as its punishments: those tender with their own wives on the sabbath or fast-days, or festivals, are boiled in a cauldron of oil and pitch. Tunc beatus Petrus Apostolus dixit: isti quos vides cruciari idcirco taliter torquentur, quoniam Dominicis diebus, vel Sanctorum festivitatibus, atque præcipuis jejuniis a carnali voluptate et a suis uxoribus se nequaquam refrenare studuerunt. Sunt enim quidam, qui omni tempore licite et inculpabiliter cum conjugibus suis se luxuriam posse confidunt: omnino tamen talibus diebus ab uxoribus abstinendum est. Id. cap. 5.

(3) v. 2.

vidence, had no need of putting the brute to sleep; so that those lumps of clay are not to appease, but to punish his voracity.

D. —— XXXVI.

'I have elsewhere said' (it is Boccaccio's note on the present passage)' that spirits are incorporeal and as such are invisible to human eyes: nevertheless our Author endows them in this poem with bodies, and herein imitates Virgil who adopts throughout the sixth of the Aeneid the same contrivance of making incorporeal substances and punishments appear corporeal, in order to be more easily understood (1).' But here Virgil followed Plato who supposed them not wholly immaterial, but in a middle state between body and pure spirit; and Dante, not only Virgil, but S. Austin (2).

E. —— LII.

Messer Ciacco was a respectable Florentine gentleman, 'a man' (writes Landino) 'of pleasing manners and singularly winning eloquence, distinguished for his urbanity, wit and facetiousness, and altogether most amiable in society (3).' Such a character is so contrary to that given by M. Ginguené, that it invalidates all his criticisms on the

(1) Comento p. 346.

(2) . . . inter corpus et spiritum mædiam. De Civ. Dei, Lib. VIII. cap. 14. and 15, and Lib. XXI. cap. 10.

(3) Eloquente e pieno d'urbanità e di motti e di facezie e di soavissima conversatione.

present Canto, by proving clearly that he had not entered into its spirit. But particularly when he applies the term *vile* (1) to Ciacco, it is not to be denied, that he hazards a most manifest interpolation. Dante (whose business was not to degrade his jocund countryman, but to point out the evils of luxury) seems to have done what he could to prevent this mistake; for he greets him in a most friendly manner, melting at the sufferings of one, whose brilliant and harmless mirth he had probably long known, loved, and admired; although he could not but condemn as a patriot what he had smiled at as a companion.

Boccaccio tells a story in his Decameron (2) about one Ciacco; but whether he means precisely the same person of whom Dante is now speaking, is not quite certain: nor indeed is it so, whether Ciacco was not a surname. That it was synonimous with *porco*, pig, is probable, but not absolutely proved (3); and even if it were so, that would not establish that it was expressive of the disposition of him who bore it, any more than with us Mr. Smith indicates his employment by his appellation. Although Ciacco might have been once, like such English titles, conferred as a characteris-

(1) Enfin l' on n'aime pas à le voir donner des larmes au sort de ce *vil Ciacco*. Hist. Litt. Vol. 2. p. 53.

(2) Giorn. 9. Nov. 8.

(3) Ciacco nella volgar lingua nel tempo di Dante *sembra* volesse dir porco. Poggiali, Ed. Livorn. Vol. 3. p. 81.

tic, it might, like them, have become hereditary before Dante's day; and that no family called Ciacco appears in Villani, (nor, as far as I have observed, in any of the Priorists) is no proof of there not having been any such; because it might have been used to designate, not an entire family, but a particular branch of one (as was frequently the case), and no registry of family names can well be verified farther back than the year 1300 — the date of the present poem. But it appears impossible either that Dante would have applied the term *pig* to such a pleasing, inoffensive individual, as Landino pictures Ciacco to have been; or that to one meriting such an ignominous reproach he would have conceded the honor of a tear, as we shall see he does in the next tiercet but one. We must allow then, that the identity of this gentleman escapes us: it is of small consequence; and it suffices to know that he possessed both rank, good-nature and wit, and was a frequenter of the tables of the rich and gay, and moved in the widest circle of fashion, to enable us to gather, that no fitter person could be selected to inform us of the domestic politics of his native city. The chiefs of the day might have returned a partial answer to Dante's queries; but the festive Ciacco, who had laughed with, and at the conflicting factions, had no undue bias; nor was the lesson taught through such a medium less emphatic. A few tiercets lower down, we shall therefore find

him predict the guilt and misfortunes of Florence.

F. —— LXI.

I presume never was an epithet applied more appropriately, than this of *divided* to the city of Florence.

G. —— LXIII.

Two distinct questions are put to Ciacco, that shall be answered as distinctly: what is to be the fate of Florence? and contains it not a single just and righteous man, for whose sake it might be spared? So of old Abraham urged to the Lord: "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? ..... And the Lord said, if I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." The whole of this XVIII of Genesis is highly interesting.

H. —— LXIV.

Recollecting that this descent is supposed to have taken place early in 1300, it will follow, that the events to which Ciacco now refers (and which I am about to relate,) make a poetical prophecy: for none of them occurred before 1300, some of them even after 1302, the period of Dante's exile; so that (if he was advanced farther than this in the composition of the Divine Comedy before his exile, as, I think, shall be clearly substantiated) whatever portions of them were posterior to 1302

are *necessarily* in the predicament of having been inserted into the Canto long after it had been written; a mode (as I have shown) *probably* followed with respect to Lucia of Prato-vecchio, and *possibly* too with respect to the epoch selected for the opening of the poem (1).

The close of the thirteenth century saw Florence in a more flourishing state than she had ever attained, or is likely to attain again. The dispersion of the Ghibellines in the battle of Campaldino ten years before (2), left the Guelphs in undisturbed possession of the government; there were no strifes either between the nobles themselves, or the nobility and the people; the revenue was considerable; public works were erecting; all Tuscany was in obedience, partly as allies, partly subjects; and even within sound of the city tocsin could be mustered, at a moment's warning, no less an army than a hundred thousand men, — thirty thousand inside of the walls and seventy thousand in the immediate vicinity. But this felicity was not permanent. It was the fifteenth of April of the very year 1300, that a tavern altercation between two hot young men (Amadore and Carlino Can-

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto I. p. 8. — Canto II. p. 147. M. Sismondi ridicules fairly enough the dogmatism with which some argue; as if a poet must necessarily begin with the first verse of his poem and proceed regularly, verse by verse, to the last. Dante better than any one (from the independant nature of his Cantos) might go backward and forward, and retouch, without the risk of breach of connexion, and probably often did. Hist. des Repub. Ital. Vol. IV. p. 183.

(2) Hell, Comment. Canto I. p. 7.

cellieri) of the same name and near relatives, in the little town of Pistoja, (effecting a mischief in no proportion with so insignificant a cause) sowed the speedy ruin of the illustrious and powerful Florentine republic(1). The Cancellieri were a family of not very high lineage, but so rich, that they were considered as by far the most powerful in Pistoja, and scarcely inferior to any in Tuscany; boasting of eighteen knights of the gold spur, and a hundred valiant men at arms. Their common ancestor was a merchant, who, besides an immense fortune, left a very numerous issue by two wives; one of whom being named (Bianca) White, the other was called (Nera) Black; and their respective children were designated by similar appellations (2). In that drunken squabble one of the Blacks, young Amadore, having been slightly wounded, and disdaining to take revenge on the youth who was the offendor (Carlino, the White), lay in wait that evening with an intention to murder the first of the same party who should pass by: and a certain

(1) Macchiavelli, Ist. Fior. Lib. 2. p. 85.—Gio. Villani, Lib. VIII. Cap. 38.

(2) Fioravanti affirms that their true names were Nera and Bianca, and gives the genealogical tree. That one should have been called Bianca by right, and her successor acquire, on that account, the name Nera, is natural; but if so strange a coincidence occurred, as that they had those opposite appellations from their child-hood, we may suppose it ominous of the unnatural factions that were to ensue. Other chroniclers however attribute other origins to hose terms: as Ferretti Vicen. (Rer. Ital. Scrip. T. IX.) who deduces them from two brothers, one with black and the other with light hair. Fior. Mem. Ist. di Pistoja. p. 248.

Vanni, a lawer, happing to be the luckless wight, was assaulted so violently by that juvenile ruffian, that, although he was not exactly put to death, he was severely lacerated in the face and had a hand cut off (1). It was the style of the age, that to have complete revenge one must punish, not the actual criminal, but some innocent member of the same body. To have wreaked it on the former would have been only a chastisement to be expected; and not likely to cause that profound desolation, which true revenge required. Besides, since the first violence had fallen on an innocent man, it was necessary, to maintain equality, that the second too should be directed against one as innocent (2). Amadore's father however (who must have been somewhat of an exception to the rudeness of the times) obliged him to go to ask pardon of his cousin, Vanni; and, with marvellous generosity considering his knowledge of the man, delivered up his son to Vanni's father to be sentenced as he thought proper; only conjuring him not to forget that the youth, though culpable, was his near relative. The barbarity of what succeeded is rendered far more flagrant if (as some write (3))

(1) His left hand, except the thumb. Fior. ut supra.

(2) Sismondi, Hist. des Repub. Ital. Vol. IV. p. 98.

(3) Priorista Fiorentino. p. 40.... *ferì leggiermente*... Indeed neither Villani, nor Dino Compagni, nor Macchiavelli mentions the cutting off of more than one hand; and surely one suffices. Benvenuti of Imola's recital of the matter is still more different: he speaks of a hand amputated for no other offence than a slap given by one child to another.

Vanni had only been slightly wounded, and that not premeditatedly, but in a fray: for his brutal father, opening the door to Amadore, led him forthwith into the stable, and cut off his right hand upon the manger and gave him a deep gash across the face, without uttering any other speech than this — 'now you are at liberty to return home and say to him who sent you, that wounds are healed by steel, not by words.' This savage act, which in a well-regulated community would have only excited universal abhorrence, and been quietly punished by the insulted law of the land, gave, in Pistoja, immediate birth to two furious factions, the Blacks and the Whites; who adopted these adverse colours in the Cockades which they hastened to assume. Nor did the pestilence rest in Pistoja; but spreading like wild-fire throughout Tuscany, it arrived in a few weeks at Florence, which, as if impatient of peace and prosperity, received with transport the pledge of civil war and separated at once, nobles and people (all promiscuously without exception — 'male and female, poor and rich, priest and friar (1)') into *Blacks* and *Whites*: the former banner being hoisted by the ancient and potent Donati; and the latter by the Cerchi, a family of less illustrious

In this however he is not so likely to be accurate, as the chroniclers of Pistoja itself. As to the substance of the atrocity, all agree. Mur. Antiq. Ital. Vol. 1. p. 1136.

(1) Ist. Pistolesi, ap. Rer. Ital. Scrip. T. XI. p. 368.

extraction, but richer than any other in the Commonwealth. 'The Donati or chiefs of the *Blacks*, (says Boccaccio(1))' were somewhat on the decline in point of fortune: and this consideration contributed perhaps a little to render them still more affable towards their fellow citizens of every rank, than their natural courtesy prompted: the Cerchi, or *white* chieftains were on the contrary all of them rich, and not only very haughty and proud, but even rather rude and contumelious in their manners, as if they disdained to caress their townsmen or in any way seek after popularity.' These factions entering into Florence in the first days of May, 1300, gave rise to incessant sanguinary broils during the entire month: the Pope in vain endeavouring to appease them, by calling the eldest of the Cerchi to Rome; for this *White* chieftain refused to make peace with the Donati, under the pretence of his not being at war with them; and few circumstances prove more intelligibly the barbarity of society then, than its being a ball that was pitched upon as a rendezvous for the two factions to appear at armed; whereupon they advanced from mutual coarse jests and reviling to an actual fray, which cost one of the

(1) I capi *Bianchi* erano tutti ricchi ed agiati uomini, e per questo non erano solamente superbi ed altieri, ma anche selvatichetti intorno a costumi citadineschi, e non erano accostanti all' usanze degli uomini nè gli carrezzavano, come per avventura faceva la parte *Nera*, la quale era più povera. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 350.

Cerchi his nose (1). Thus when Dante commenced Prior on the fifteenth of June, he found the streets filled with riot and blood; (exactly as Ciacco predicts, who is now speaking, we must recollect, on the night of the eighth of April (2)) and insubordination had reached such a height, and so little respect was paid either to laws or magistrates, that it was with the utmost difficulty the *Whites* could be prevented from sacking the houses of the *Blacks* even at broad noon-day. This atrocity was attempted on return from a burial; and it would certainly have been effected, had not the chief of the *Blacks*, Corso Donati, relied more on individual courage than on succour from Government: add to all this, a Papal legate, who was sent to pacify the City, left it the seeds of still worse disorder by leaving it his interdiction. Nevertheless our poet contrived to keep the State from falling to pieces under his administration; and those two months, (for the Priorship never continued longer) as well as the remainder of the year, passed over unsullied by at least the most reprehensible of treasons, that of madly applying for foreign force. Scarce an hour however elapsed without some infringement of the public tran-

(1) Et, ut breviter dicam, uno sero ad unum tripudium Dominarum orta lite inter aliquos de utraque parte, fuit amputatus nasus uni Recoverino de Circulis. Benvenuti Im. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. Vol. 1. 1040.

(2) Hell, Comment, Canto 11. p. 67.

quillity (1); and even the remedy of a dungeon only occasioned additional crimes: for many leaders of both factions being thrown into prison, the *Black* prisoners bribed the Jailor and had all the *White* ones poisoned in a dish of pudding, or flummery (2). But in the February of 1301 the state of things became much worse; and to such extremities of mutual massacre had the rival parties advanced, ere the close of the month, that the *Blacks* resolved to dispatch an Ambassador to the Pope in order to engage him to procure them the aid of a French army, on the stipulation that they would deliver up the city to any Prince, or King, his Holiness might appoint. The Priors then in office alarmed at the discovery of such a nefarious conspiracy, sent for Dante whom (although he had six months before ceased his ministerial functions and relapsed

(1) 'For twenty-eight years' (say the Pistoiese Chroniclers, and Florence was certainly not less anarchical than Pistoja) 'the battles, murders, and burnings continued in town and country, day and night; more than once men were slain not only in presence of the chief magistrate but in the very town-hall at noon while the Judge, the Gonfaloniere, and the Podestà were presiding there with their guards, nor could these attempt to prevent such violence; so great the force of the offenders. At last the Podestà finding his orders disregarded and not even his person secure from insult, laid down his wand of office and judging such people totally unworthy of either laws or Magistrates went away, and left them free to butcher one another without any legal incumbrance'... in presenza del Giudice, del Podestà, e di sua famiglia l'uccise, non potendo cosa alcuna dalla famiglia del Podestà essergli contrastata, per la gente che avea seco.... sicchè il Podestà puose la bacchetta della Podesteria in terra, e rifiutò la Signoria, e si partì. M. A. Salvi, delle Hist. di Pistoia, Vol. 1. p. 264.—Ist. Pist. ap. Rer. Ital. Scrip. Vol. XI. p. 368—373.

(2) . . . in un *migliaccio*.... Priorista Fiorentino, p. 42.

into a private station) they still regarded as the properest person they could consult: and his advice to sound the tocsin, arm the lower classes of the people, and instantly exile the chiefs of both those unprincipled parties, was as promptly executed, as wisely suggested (1). The *Blacks* were banished into the neighbourhood of Perugia, where they continued the plots they had begun to hatch; for which purpose their Chief, Corso Donati, repaired secretly to Rome: the *Whites* were driven to Sarzana, where they suffered shockingly from the mal'aria; so that, upon some of them dying, the rest were permitted to return to Florence about five weeks after they had quitted it. This return was attributed by many to the corrupt influence of money; but the fact is easy to be accounted for without corruption; for the Government had far less cause to reprehend the *Whites*, who were not guilty of treasonable tampering with foreigners,

(1) Le poëte Dante était un des Prieurs qui prononcèrent cette sentence. Sismondi, Hist. des Repub. Ital. Vol. IV. p 110. Here is an inaccuracy. Dante was no longer one of the Priors — his Priorship was from June 15 to August 15 of 1300. Priorista Fiorentino, p. 41. But his being consulted by the Priors, their following his advice, and his being dispatched immediately after as Ambassador to Rome in order to endeavour to counteract the treasonable intrigues of Donati and the *Blacks*, are so many proofs of his high political consequence. It was on this occasion he was over-heard saying to himself — 'if I go, who is there to remain? and, if I remain, who is there to go?' He was afterwards accused of this as of inordinate vanity. His presence was indeed equally necessary both at Florence andRome: yet even could he have been in both places at once, the times were so turbulent it would have availed little.

and it had already doubly chastised them by condemning them to a sickly residence (1). Dante had long ceased to be a Prior; nor does it appear that he had been again consulted by the Priors; otherwise it is reasonable to conclude that he would have reiterated his former advice, to keep the leaders of both factions out of Florence; and would have contented himself with simply transferring the *Whites* to some less unhealthy place of exile. Amongst these was his friend Guido Cavalcanti; who expired shortly after his arrival at home, in consequence of the Sarzana fever (2). Guido's being a *White* is no proof however of Dante's being partial to the *Whites;* since it had not prevented his recommending the sentencing of both them and him to that banishment which was cause of his death. As speciously might he have been suspected of partiality in favour of the *Blacks;* because his wife was a Donati, and the worldly interests both of himself and his numerous offspring were intimately connected with the triumph of the *Blacks*. An unprejudiced person will consider his conduct as an instance of that all-devoted patriotism rarely to be found out of Greece and Rome at their best times; and will observe, that, in counselling the

(1) Even Dino Compagni though allied with the *Blacks* (and since he was himself one of the government, no one better knew the true state of things) acknowledges frequently the lesser culpability of the *Whites*. Ist. Fior. Lib. 1.

(2) Tornò malato Guido Cavalcanti di che morio, e di lui fu gran dannaggio. Gio. Villani, Lib. VIII. cap. 41.

banishing of the leading partisans on both sides, he sacrificed to his country, on the one hand his bosom-friend, and on the other the fortunes of himself and family. Unfortunately the *Whites* though less traitorous, were not less sanguinary and impetuous than their rivals; having got entrance into Florence anew, they soon found means to render themselves dominant, and, expelling the *Blacks* altogether, sent them to join their exiled leaders. This is the first banishment to which Ciacco alludes when saying 'One wild faction shall expel her rival;' and it took place in June, 1301. The epithet *wild* (selvaggia) was usually given to the *Whites*, to express the rustic origin of their chiefs, the Cerchi, conformably to what I have already stated: and that this expulsion was attended with much 'rapine,' (con molta offensione) is also an historical fact. The *Black* chieftain, Corso Donati, having escaped from Perugia to Rome, engaged Boniface VIII. (the Pope alluded to in the verses 'whose faithless sail, etc' —v. LXVIII tal che testè piaggia) to persuade the brother of Phillip the fair of France, Charles Valois, or lackland, to go against Florence, and make the *Blacks* masters of the city, under pretence of pacifying it. His Holiness, missing no occasion of exercising a temporal interference, willingly consented; and the French Prince, then about to winter at Rome previous to his Neapolitan expedition (1), had no

(1) Yet the chroniclers of Pistoia (Rer. Ital. Scrip. Vol. xi. p. 379.—

objection to a proposal that tended to replenish his military chest: and even the Florentine Government, deeming it better to receive him amicably as Pacificator, (for such was the new invented title given him by the wily Pontiff (1)) than to push him into an alliance with the exiled faction, invited him within their walls. He therefore entered the City in procession on the first of November 1301; or nearly six months after the *Whites* had obtained the ascendancy (2). Charles had come unarmed as a peace-maker; but his concealed pretensions became visible enough in a short time; for only 4 days later, (November 5) a solemn Council of the Magistrates being held in one of the Churches, and authority conferred on him by it *to reform and pacify the city*, the assembly no sooner broke up than it beheld the whole French force drawn up armed in the great square and

M. A. Salvi Delle Hist. di Pistoia, Vol. 1. p. 271) date Charles' visit before, not after his expedition: which shows that they are of small authority with regard to any occurrences without the walls of their own city. We may rely on them when they speak of the rich presents made to the needy Frenchman and his Lady — assai moneta, drappi, e porpora di seta a lui e *alla sua Donna*.

(1) Un titre nouveau, Pacificateur de la Toscane. Sismondi, Hist. des Répub. Ital. Vol. IV. p. 115.

(2) This ascendancy was precarious enough, and many *Blacks* were concealed in the town and some even in the administration. Nothing more brilliant than the reception of Charles; to whom however, ere entering the gates, an oath was tendered that he would obey the laws of the Republic. He took it without hesitation; although his determination was to break it as soon as possible in every particular. It reminds one of Cæsar's remark, as repeated by Lord Clarendon: Galli ridentes fidem fregerunt. Life, Vol. 4. p. 10.

apparently preparing for a sack (1). Nor was this force inconsiderable; for besides his own 800 horse, there came 200 from Perugia, a pretended guard of honor, some Lucchese and Sienese with divers gentlemen from Romagna, who already were beginning the profession of condottieri, and each of whom brought with him 8 or 10 horse under pretext of paying court; to not one of whom the Government dared to deny entrance: so that the whole amounted to an army of at least 1200 chosen warriors (2). The people however, indignant at the sight, rushed spontaneously to arms and quickly forced the strangers to lay down theirs. This enthusiasm was for once not factious, but the independent legitimate disdain of a foreign yoke. That it was quite clear from undue partiality to the *Whites*, is demonstrated from the fact of their exiled rivals, who came galloping into the town during the confusion, encountering no obstacle. Yet so sure of the contrary was the Gonfalonier, the elder Cerchi, that, being informed of their approach, he refused to have the gates closed or to permit the Captain of the city to attack them in any way: 'for us to go against them is superfluous' (he cried); 'let them come in freely, and

(1) A dì 5 . . . fu data autorità al Principe Carlo di riformare la terra con pace: ma appena escì dalla Chiesa, che si vide tutta la gente Francese armata, e in forma di voler correr la città. Priorista Fior. p. 44.

(2) Dino Compagni, Lib. 2. p. 34 — Sismondi, Hist. des Répub. Ital. Vol. IV. p. 122.

the populace themselves will fall upon them.' But the populace is as light as a leaf, remarks the Priorist; those who enjoy power often abuse it, and oftener still are accused of doing so; or rather as, I have said, the courtly, popular manners of the *Blacks* had really made them favourites with the lower classes; so no sooner did Messer Corso Donati ride in at the head of his friends, than instead of being opposed, he was received with vehement plaudits and cries of 'long life to the Baron (1).' The first step of Messer Corso was, in the usual style of those times, to break open the jail, liberate its inmates without distinction, overturn the existing Government, and let slip his troops, who joined by the unchained felons, set about slaying and plundering at discretion. This sacking of the City lasted five days; and then a similar dole was dealt out to the country round, with 'huge ruin, rapine, and combustion (2):' while Charles remained inactive, pretending to know nothing that was doing; and seemed to take the fires for feux-de-joie, or, at most, for an accident befallen some

(1) The oath which Charles had taken ere entering Florence, he repeated still more solemnly before the Council in the Church of S. Maria Novella even while his troops were getting under array to break it. A similar oath had been received from him, on confiding to him the keys of one of the town gates, that he would not open it to any one in disobedience to the laws; nevertheless during that very night he let in a strong party of the exiled Blacks, and connived at the arrival of Corso Donati and the rest of them the morning after.

(2) Cum magna ruina, magnisque incendiis et populationibus. Benvenuti Imol. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. Vol. 1. p. 1041.

peasant's hut. The *Whites* however were not actually banished on this occasion; so that it is not to it that Ciacco alludes as the period when 'their rivals shall again prevail' (che l'altra surmonti, v. LXVIII): but they maintained themselves in their towers and houses for almost two years in daily murderous encounters with their antagonists. On the twenty-fifth of December 1301, after Charles had been in Florence above six weeks, a particularly bloody contest took place on one of the bridges: so little advance had he made in his emprize of *reforming and pacifying* the city. On the twenty-seventh of January following Dante (who had been for some time at Rome negociating to prevent the entrance of the French into Florence, and still continued in his post of Ambassador to the Holy See) was sentenced to exile; not indeed for being a *White*, as Machiavelli imagined, but on an accusation of peculation and other vague misdemeanors(1). This accusation was only a pretext: the real cause was his opposition to the injustice and corruption of the French Prince; who, far from

(1) Pelli (Mem. p. 89) quoting the sentence writes: 'Messer Palmieri degli Altoviti and Dante Alighieri being accused by public report were proceeded against for being *opponents of Charles*' — perchè contradissero Carlo — 'and for having committed peculation' — quod fecerunt baratterias et acceperunt quod non licebat. This latter was the more ostensible, the former the real charge. If they delayed to pay the fine to which they were sentenced — bona devastentur et mittantur in commune: and even paying it — nihilominus stent in exilio extra fines Tusciæ duobus annis. Bib. Magliabechiana, Cod. 44.

acting as a pacificator, employed himself in amassing treasure by the most iniquitous sale of places and immunities (1). On the tenth of March, issued the second and most barbarous sentence rendering Dante's exile perpetual, and condemning him and 14 others to be burnt alive if caught within Tuscany (2). During the next month, it is true, some of the Cerchi, and other *Whites* also, were put to ban by Charles, under colour of having engaged in a plot against him; but the existence of that

(1) Charles was a vast spendthrift and therefore by necessity, as well as taste, a prodigious robber. His various modes of extortion would fill a volume. One luckless gentleman had been so civil as to invite him on a hunting party to his country-house; on which his royal Guest had him seized by some of his satellites, and threatened to send him prisoner into Puglia, if he did not ransom himself with 4000 florins; and at last by the intercession of friends the matter was adjusted by a payment of 800. One seems to be reading the feats of the modern Roman banditi. Similar violence was perpetrated every moment, not only against rich men, but against minors of both sexes, but particularly the weaker. In all this Cante di Agobbio, the new Podestà, was an inimitable auxiliary; for he twisted the laws to the same purposes, pronouncing a sentence of exile against more than 600 persons, all of whom were also condemned to pay from eight to ten thousand florins each, or to have their entire property confiscated. Even the Priors themselves were not secure; and knowing their assassination was intended, only escaped by the utmost personal circumspection and the surrendering of large sums of money. So, of money Charles amassed a profusion; well justifying the Pope's assurance that in sending him to Florence he had put his hand into 'the fountain of gold.' Dino Compagni, Lib. 2. p. 37—47.

(2) Tiraboschi (T. 2. p. 494) gives this sentence verbatim from a copy taken from the Archives of Florence. It is regularly authenticated by the Magistrates, and dated 1302, March 10. It is in most barbarous Latin. Il semble (writes Sismondi) qu'on ait choisi à dessein le langage le plus barbare pour condamner le poëte qui fondait la littérature Italienne. Hist. des Répub. Ital. Vol. IV. p. 184.

plot was as unproved as the peculation of Dante; and their real misdemeanor was that of possessing great riches both in gardens and palaces, all of which were plundered by the French (1); who at last evacuated Florence in May 1302, that is, 6 months after they had entered it; and followed their Prince against Naples, where he was destined to reap as little glory as had been merited by his treachery and rapacity among the Tuscans (2). Both he and two Cardinals, who were deputed at different periods, instead of establishing tranquillity in Florence, as they professed to endeavour to do, left it in far worse confusion than they had found it. Every vial of wrath seemed to be poured out on that devoted spot, murder, famine, pestilence, excommunications (besides the fall of a bridge during a public festival, by which many thousands of both sexes were drowned in the Arno) and, to crown the whole, a terrible fire which was purposely lit by a most wicked priest, at the

(1) It was one of the Podestà's most usual schemes — molti furono accusati, e convenia loro confessare, aveano fatta congiura, che *non l' aveano fatta* (Dino Compagni Lib. 2. p. 44.) sotto il detto *ingannevole* trattato, si partirono della città... e furono condannati per Messere Carlo come rubelli, e *disfatti i loro Palazzi*, ec. Gio. Villani, Lib. VIII. Cap. 48. The charge was founded upon letters; which Machiavelli avows were probably fabrications. Istorie Fior. Lib. 2. p. 91.

(2) Id. Id. — Il partit pour la Sicile emportant avec lui les maledictions des Toscans. In Sicily he was soon obliged to sue for peace; and thence returned ignominously into France, as well meriting the reputation of *lackland* as when he left it — notwithstanding the Pope's promise of making him, among other magnificent things, Emperor of Constantinople. Sismondi, Hist. des Répub. Ital. Vol. IV. p. 127.

instigation of Donati and the *Blacks*, and which burned down more than 1900 fine houses, palaces, and churches; that is, above half the town, before it could be extinguished (1). Still the *Whites* (as a body) were not as yet sent into banishment, although a few of their chiefs had been; so that, it were incorrect on this account to apply the second banishment referred to by Ciacco to any of the above events. He identifies this banishment by saying it occurred three solar years (infra tre sole) after the prior one — that is after the ascendancy obtained by the *Whites* on return from Sarzana. So, as this ascendancy dates June, 1301, we must look for the other event about 1304: and, in fact, I find that it was in July of that year that the *Whites* were entirely overthrown. To this it is, that v. LXVIII alludes; and if other commentators pretend otherwise, it is only, that they are not minute chronologists. The *White* chiefs, by degrees as they became exiled, congregated in Pistoja, and conducted their affairs by means of a council of twelve, one of whom was our poet, who had joined them on his leaving his Roman Embassy after the sentences promulgated against him. No favourable opportunity for action presented itself before 1304; during the summer of which, the new elected Pope (Benedict XI) was

(1) Un malvagio Prete scelleratamente mise lo fuoco.... e ciò accadde il 10 di Giugno 1304. Priorista Fior. p. 51. This authority calculates 1500 houses, etc; but Dino Compagni 1900. Lib. 3. p. 65.

prevailed upon to cite the modern Catiline (Corso Donati (1)) and eleven others of the *Blacks* before him: and on their obeying the summons, those *Whites* who were in banishment were advised to seize the occasion, which had been made by his Holiness expressly to favour them, and penetrate into Florence, while their enemies were deprived of so many of their leaders (2). And so indeed they did: and on the twenty-second of July, advanced into the very heart of the city ('as far as the square of S. John') in beautiful array, with their snow-white banners and garlands of Olive in their bonnets, offerring not the smallest violence to any one; for although they had their swords drawn, their points were held down, and their cry was ever peace, peace, peace! Although the leaders were *Whites*, their troops to the amount of 1200 men-at-arms on horseback were chiefly from Bologna, Arezzo and Romagna; and they were dressed in white cloaks, a symbol both of their party and their pacific intentions. But the enterprize failed; in a great

(1) Un Cavaliere della somiglianza di Catilina Romano, ma più crudele di lui, gentile di sangue, bello del corpo, piacevole parlatore, adorno di belli costumi, sottile d'ingegno, coll'animo sempre intento a mal fare, col quale molti masnadieri si raunavano, etc. Dino Compagni, Lib 2. p. 43.

(2) Yet Villani denies the Pope was a party in the business. The *Whites* being in such small numbers (and indeed almost all their troops being strangers) proves that it had been only a few heads of family that were expelled earlier than 1304. Villani adds a few hundreds to the force as calculated by Dino Compagni, but agrees in representing them as a mixed horde of mercenaries.

degree by their own imprudence in having the foolhardiness to prefer to the friendly hours of shade the glaring meridian of a day so hot that the very air appeared to be on fire, and in taking no precautions to have water for themselves and horses; but also partly by the want of courage of their ill-assorted levies, and the defection of their partisans within the city. These, far from aiding them, retired into their houses; and some even took up arms against them and set fire to the buildings in their vicinity in order to recommend themselves to the *Blacks;* so that the unfortunate *White* captains, betrayed by their own allies, assailed by their foes, and parched almost to death by the torrid sun, were beaten back with grievous loss in the battle and incalculable cruelties after it. Those that could be taken prisoners were either butchered on the spot, or reserved for the more ignominious fate of the rack and the gibbet: and the event was closely followed by the expulsion, not merely of all the Cerchi and other white potentates, but radically of their entire party (1). They were henceforth doomed to roam about the rest of Italy in the utmost penury and 'slavery:' and that they should continue in that miserable situation 'long' (lungo tempo) was all that Dante could put into the mouth of Ciacco, or of any one else at any time, for they

(1) Dino Compagni Lib. 3. p. 65— Gio. Villani, Lib. VIII. cap. 72— Machiavelli, Ist. Fior. Lib. 2. p. 94.

were still in exile when he died. They dispersed themselves up and down from Calabria to the Alps, and, naturally allying with those of their fellow-citizens who had been exiled years before as Ghibellines, they all became known promiscuously under this latter old term of reproach; and the appellation *Whites* fell into disuse, and of course that opposed to it, *Blacks*, also. Dante consequently, who had been so unjustly accused of belonging to the former faction, was fated quite as unjustly to partake of its fresh obloquy and to be branded with a charge of Ghibellinism: but we have seen that he was already exiled and sentenced to be burnt alive, long before either he or the *Whites* had incurred that charge; and, as we go on, we shall have continual occasions of proving (what I affirmed from the beginning (1)), that he was never either *Guelph* or *Ghibelline*, as clearly as, I hope, I have here done, that he was neither *Black* nor *White*.

Perhaps few better illustrations of the miserable fluctuation of things in Florence can be given, than the declaration of Boccaccio, (who wrote so shortly after the events we have been reciting) that those same Donati and Cerchi, so much spoken of as absolute masters of the Republic, were dropt into poverty and so gone out of notice that scarcely any remembrance of them existed (2). In

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 4.

(2) Furon de' nostri dì in tanto stato che guidarono le cose piccole e grandi, secondo il piacere loro, ove oggi appena è ricordo di loro. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 17.

fact, the one family decayed away in banishment, and the other was destined to be a speedy victim to the same populace that had so delighted, but a little before, in loading it with honors and privileges even beyond what was consistent with the Constitution: and thus was begun that declension of the Aristocracy, which Machiavelli considered as having been the immediate cause of the ruin of the liberty of his native land (1). Dante then, could he have foreseen the entire truth, would have made a still more lamentable addition to Ciacco's prophecy, and foretold the final subversion of political freedom with its manifold advantages.

I. ——LXIX.

'Within three years the *Black* faction shall rise, by the aid' (this is the text verbatim) 'of *one* who quickly tacks (2). Long shall he lift his sublime front and keep crushed by heavy burdens the *Whites*, while they both lament and blush for their sufferings.' The usual way of understanding this

(1) Di quì nasceva le variazioni delle insegne e le mutazioni dei titoli delle famiglie che i nobili per parere del popolo facevano: tanto che quella virtù d'armi e generosità d'animo ch'era nella nobiltà si spegneva ... e Firenze sempre più umile e più abbietta ne divenne. Ist. Fior. Lib. 3. p. 141.

(2) *Piaggia* is explained variously. The general way is to consider it a nautical term answering to coasting, or tacking. There is also the various reading of alto or alte. Boccaccio gives the latter; and then the nominative to 'lift' may be either 'he' (tal) or (l'altra), 'Black faction': the Academicians read alto; and then it must be 'he', as I have rendered it —unless (what seems a needless refinement) alto be used adverbially.

passage is to make the *one* mean Charles Valois: but I apply it not at all to him, but directly to Pope Boniface VIII, on the concurrent authorities of Boccaccio and the Riccardi manuscript (1), as well as on what appear to me to be the most obvious considerations. This interpretation agrees exactly with the individual character of Boniface; with all the political events related in the last comment; and with Dante's recorded opinions. Of no Pope more than the one in question could it be more correcly said, that "he always joined with the prevailing powers, when they did not thwart his pretensions (2)." And what nature his pretensions often were, may be gathered from the claim that he made to the crown of Scotland: for, the king of that country having sought for the Pontiff's interference between him and our Edward I, a papal rescript was composed condemning both the royal litigants, and substituting "the Court of Rome's claim to he itself liege-lord of Scotland; a claim which had not once been heard of, but which, with a singular confidence, was now asserted to be full, entire, and derived from the most remote antiquity (3)." The fraudulent conduct

(1) Comento, Vol. 1. p. 351 —Cioè Papa Bonifazio che imprima piaggiava e non mostrava di tenere parte. Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016. — Mr. Cary in explaining it "Charles of Valois" is not to be blamed; for many of the commentators do the same, even the last, M. Biagioli. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 128.

(2) Hume, Hist. Vol. 3. p. 454.

(3) Id. Id. p. 100.

of the Legates, who, sent under pretence of pacifying Florence, always left it in a more disturbed state than they had found it, must be observable enough throughout the preceding comment. Dante too must have been peculiarly aware of this treachery; as is clear, not only from his writings but from the fact, that he was in Rome busy in endeavouring to withstand it, at the very moment that the two sentences against him were promulgated in Florence. To understand Boniface here then is quite in character: but not so Charles. For it were ridiculous to make Ciacco predict that Charles should persecute the Whites *long*; since he did not stay above 6 months altogether in Tuscany (1). It were also as inapposite to talk of Charles 'lifting his sublime front;' since he was so far from meriting any such pompous phraseology, that he became vulgarly designated as *Lackland* from his impotency and poverty: which remark is rendered more cogent, if we reflect that at whatever period the body of this Canto was composed, these lines at least of it must, as I premised, have been inserted at a late period; indeed

(1) The dates are thus, as verified by the Priorists: origin of *Blacks* and *Whites*, April 15, 1300 — Dante, Prior from June 15, to August 15, 1300 — some Chiefs, *Blacks* and *Whites*, exiled February, 1301 — *Blacks* exiled June, 1301 — Charles Valois enters Florence November, 1301 — Dante exiled January and March, 1302 — some *White* chiefs exiled April, 1302 — Charles leaves Florence May, 1302 — *Whites* all exiled July, 1304. Thus Charles was only in Florence from November to May.

after 1307, (for we shall see that Dante had not in his power to alter or correct any part of his poem sooner) that is, after Charles' misfortunes had made him the jest of all Europe (1). How consonant on the contrary is Boniface with those words of Dante! For, although that Pope died himself, the impulse which he had given to the Holy See did not: and the Church-party (under whatever name known, Papists, Blacks, or Guelphs) still continued to 'crush' the *Whites*, with an acrimony that was in full vigour, not only when our poet wrote, but even when he expired. As to Dante's opinion of Boniface, we shall have it so often recorded that we shall be convinced he would not willingly have lost any occasion of reprimanding him. It could not then have been likely that he would have said nothing about him, when treating of circumstances during which he displayed the whole duplicity of his character: for it is generally thought that the whole of Charles' conduct in Florence was prompted by the Pope, notwithstanding his apparent disapproval of it. To warrant my interpretation, the authorities I set out by citing would have sufficed: but this lengthened exposition of the grounds which support it, will be excused on considering, that it is contrary to the opinions of the modern commentators.

(1) Carlo partì per seguire l'impresa sua di Sicilia, nella quale non fu più savio nè migliore che si fusse stato in Firenze; tanto che vituperato con perdita di molti de' suoi si tornò in Francia Mach. Ist. Lib. 2. p. 91.

K. —— LXXIII.

This is the answer to Dante's second question, which, as I have observed, is an allusion to Genesis. Who the two just were, is not easy to decide now; and no wonder, since even Boccaccio acknowledged his inability to do so five centuries ago (1). Many consider as meant Dante himself and his friend Guido Cavalcanti: but Dante had been so far from holding Guido to be a *just*, unprejudiced man unimplicated in either faction, that he had been the first himself to sentence him to exile in Sarzana, as we have seen. To recur to the allegories would not render the matter clearer. We may with Velutello cite a passage in the historian, Villani; who relates the demise of 'two good and upright citizens in 1331, at whose tomb various miracles were performed (2).' Of their miracles (at least their posthumous ones) Dante could have known nothing certainly; for he died ten years before. But for this difficulty, we might tenaciously adhere to Velutello's suggestion: and, no doubt, tranquil goodness was rare enough in that

(1) ... sarebbe grave lo indovinare. Comento, Vol. 1. p. 352.— The Ottimo is as doubtful, non gli nomina: nor does any one of the oldest commentators decide.

(2) Moriron in Firenze due buoni e giusti uomini e di santa vita e conversazione e di grandi limosine, tutto che fossero laici; ..... e per ciascuno mostrò Iddio aperti miracoli di sanar infermi; ... e per ciascuno fu fatto solenne sepoltura e poste più imagini di cera per voti fatti. Ist. Lib. x. Cap. 179.

factious age to merit distinct encomium; it must have been delightful to Dante to turn a moment from the barbarous manners of his day, and contemplate the philosophic and amiable dispositions of two of his fellow-countrymen, however private their stations; nor were they beneath the notice of a poet, who were commemorated by an historian.

L. —— LXXXI.

Dante, who had known those for whom he inquires to be adepts in the arts of luxurious revelling, asks where they are? because he expected to find them in this circle, where the crime of intemperance is punished; or, it may be, because their greatness of mind inspired him with a tenderness that struggled against the sentence of reprobation to which we shall find him at length consign them; and that wishing to testifiy this, he inquires after their destiny with hesitation. In this circle lie none of them; and we learn that they are far worse off, being in 'deeper dens,' as having been betrayed by luxurious living into various flagitious disorders. Our poet is not even content with inquiring whether they be in this circle; but asks whether they be not perhaps in Paradise, as if he considered that possible. Many imagine this to be irony, when they reflect, that we shall be presented hereafter with those of whom he speaks in different horrid situations, for most monstrous malefactions: and such will argue

that the moral poet could not have intended to lead his readers into the mistake of thinking, that such examples of iniquity could have been suspected of any other destination than a Tartarean one. Yet one annotator supposes, that Dante, writing sometimes as a theologian, and sometimes as a Patriot, gives two different opinions in those two characters; so that as a Patriot he *extols* the personages he at present names, although he afterwards condemns them as a theologian (1). But it is to be considered whether it were possible for a patriot to extol them. That they had some grand features in their characters merits them a place in this poem; for if they had been as feeble as wicked, it would not have been worth while to notice them: but if their superior talents were converted to bad purposes, a patriot must *more severely condemn*, not extol them; and that in the actual instance they were so converted is certain, except we can pretend that sodomy, atheism, and murder are patriotic attainments. It is an injustice, among the many flagrant ones done to this great man, to make him profess opposite sentiments on the same ethical questions; and affirm one thing as a religionist and another as a citizen. Either the religion, or politicsof such a person must be evil. But this

(1) Parla per lo più come Teologo, ma molte volte ancora come puro Cittadino:... perciò come Cittadini gli chiama degni, ma come uomini gli confina nell' Inferno per le loro teologicamente considerate colpe. Poggiali, Ed. Livor. Vol. 3. p. 85.

idle accusation is without foundation; his writings present us with no incongruity between his religious and political creed. We shall find him displaying traitors to their country as suffering in the lowest region of the abyss; and the complete identity of public utility with the law of God seems to have been as favourite a thesis with him, as with Paley himself. Theology, taken as an absract science, is scarce to be noticed in his compositions; his usual word being Supreme Philosophy, (as I mentioned heretofore (1)) in which was included all knowledge and goodness, sacred and profane. I see him invariably treating his faith, as if it were a main portion of his philosophy; and he advances nothing to awake a reasonable suspicion of his ever having considered his ecclesiastical tenets as at variance with his civil duties. It were difficult not to concede, that when he so deeply damns public traitors, he does so both as a Divine and a Patriot. To prove the dangerous vices of the men that have been named, I shall mention their histories in a few lines; for we shall have occasion to say much more of them hereafter. Tegghiajo (which must be pronounced as a word of only *two* syllables, the iajo being a double dipthong (2)) was a Guelph captain who had made a famous figure in the battle of MonteAperti, which was fought about

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 120.

(2) Mr. Cary is guilty of a false quantity, for he makes it a word of *three* syllables.

five years before Dante was born. Tegghiajo was therefore a twofold scourge to his native land, by his sanguinary disposition, and his unnatural propensities; for we shall find him among the Sodomites. Jacob Rasticucci was deep tainted with the same crime against nature, and we shall find him in the same cavern. Arrigo said to be of the Fifanti, is now personally unknown; and it is probable he died young, or that he amended his life, or that our poet forgot him; for he is the only one of them of whom we shall see no more throughout the poem, and of whose guilt we cannot therefore judge. The family of Fifanti itself however was one of the pests of Tuscany; and its ancestral honours were quite out-balanced by its factious nature: it is included in Machiavelli's list of Ghibellines. Mosca we shall discover lacerated at the bottom of the infernal pit; and he was indeed not only a murderer himself, but the original cause of more murders than ever were deduced from any single source: for by a barbarous and premeditated assassination he was the first who gave a sanguinary birth to the Guelphs and the Ghibellines in Florence; —— factions destined to last longer and spill more blood than any others that ever existed. Farinata was the Ghibelline General opposed to Tegghiajo in that same great battle of Monte-Aperti between Guelphs and Ghibellines; and this pairing off together of the leaders of both the bloody parties may be received as the

first of many instances which overturn vulgar prejudices, and make good my assertion that Dante was neither Guelph nor Ghibelline, but a steady patriot detesting their mutual enormities. This Farinata entered Florence after the battle, overset the Government, exiled the Guelphs, and reduced the city under a foreign yoke. He will appear hereafter among the materialists; for he was of 'Epicurus' sty,' not only in living, but in disbelieving. In what tone but in sarcasm, or indignation, could Dante have named these? was the question I first pronounced within myself. But when I read over again the passages where those characters are named in the future Cantos, and pondered on the deep emotion and reverence which accompany his severe reproof —— and reflected on the eminent, though disastrous, talents of those men, who were leaders of great, though terribly destructive, factions among the Florentine republicans during their least corrupted period —— and recognised for a truth, that the chiefs of the worst factions have in general (what their followers have not) some high qualities, if not virtues, to redeem their evil; all these considerations oblige me to leave the matter (as to whether Dante meant this passage as ironical, or not) undecided. Or rather my opinion is, that he intended it should be indecisive; and was willing to couple a vindictive anathema against their vices with an affectionate recollection of their lofty powers; and penned his

phrases purposely so, as to challenge doubt and discussion as to their final doom — a mode of writing both philosophically sceptical in itself, and sufficiently familiar to his style; being somewhat akin to what we already observed in the case of *Francesca da Rimini* (1).

M. — LXXXIX.

This desire that Ciacco is made to express, of being remembered on earth, were alone sufficient proof that it was not intended to represent him as *vile*. If Mr. Ginguené thought this Canto inferior to the preceding, it was, perhaps, because he did not understand it (2). It must have been a consciousness of having been, not despised, but beloved and courted during life, as an aimable private gentleman, that instigated Ciacco's wish to be recollected: his inoffensive manners were no slight recommendation in that desperate age; and his luxurious habits, not having betrayed him into any consummate iniquities, would have scarcely merited reprehension, if it were not for example's sake in a republic not to be upheld without prudence and sobriety; virtues that were already on the decline in Florence, and on whose final disappearance that free city was to be enslaved by one of its own subjects — a plebeian merchant soon

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto v. p. 335.

(2) Ce Chant est très-inférieur aux précédents. Hist. Litt. d'Italie. Vol. 2. p. 53.

swelled into a Ducal one. Dante ill performed this request of preserving Ciacco's memory; whether from judging further explanation superfluous with regard to a man well known, or from tenderness to the individual, or from a belief that the satire would be more generally useful by being less particularly applied (1).

N. —— XCIII.

Alfieri remarks (and with good reason) that in the original the rhythm of this tiercet is very imitative of the drowsy fall it describes. We are to recollect Ciacco was only sitting, not standing, up.

O. —— XCIX.

The abrupt exclamation of Virgil is surely sublime; and as such, equally beyond praise and controversy, it is pointed out by M. Meriah (2). 'I willingly apply to the poet himself' (writes a French reviewer) 'his own magnificent verse:' for strains, that are fated to live eternally, may be well pronounced

. . . . . His voice that rolls
Echoing through ages, —— through the age unending (3).

(1) I find the very same reasons for the selection of Ciacco in the *Ottimo* — perchè fu di leggiadri costumi, molto famoso in delectatione, e di belli motti. Such a character may be reprehended by a rigid republican and moralist, but what has it to merit M. Ginguené's *vile*?

(2) Mem. de l'Acad. de Berlin. 1784.

(3) J'applique volontiers à Dante lui même son vers sublime:
Udirà quel che in eterno rimbomba.
Journal des Savans. Nov. 1818.

P. —— CV.

There is something so gloomy in the idea of the eternal separation of a pair who had been long united most closely, that men (without any reference to the comparative veracity of their creeds) seem to have agreed in considering it unnatural: and the Platonists, Pythagoreans, Magi, and endless varieties of idolators, as well as Christians, speak of the body and soul being destined to meet again after their separation. It is indeed hard to convince ourselves, either of our own parting for ever from our present form, or of those we hold dear from theirs; and even if it were not a difficult, it would be a melancholy persuasion. But, in truth, what is melancholy is usually difficult; and what we sincerely wish, we readily believe: so we continue to cherish the soothing doc-

Whether Mr. Cary intended to make this voice of the Eternal, instead of echoing thoughout illimitable space, have the specific effect of rending the vaults of the dead, I do not know: but his version bears that aspect —

"And hear the eternal *doom* re-echoing rend
The vault" —

and it is not certainly the figure given by Dante, nor (in my opinion) half so majestic as his. How poor is *doom* instead of His — quel! For I translate verbatim 'shall hear *Him* who echoes through eternity:' making quel mean colui, or Iddio (God), and not quel suono — which last word is considered by some commentators as understood but unnecessarily and, I think, most injudiciously. If quel refers to suono, the indicative (rimbomba) must be put for the future, rimbomberà; but apply it as I do, and the words are to be construed precisely as they are written.

trine, that, though death separates us from that oldest of our friends, the body, with whose pains we had sympathized and whose imperfections we had borne, we shall again find it; and rejoice that it has become incapable of suffering, and of more prompt and faithful service than ever. It will then be without murmuring (what it ought always to be) subservient to the spirit: and such an expectation the spirit may indulge when disrobing here below; and, though on flight towards beatitude, may linger for a moment to cast a look on its terrene brother; and, losing his present abjection in a clear foresight of his future glory, and the sorrow of farewell in the joyfulness of an endless meeting, it may, without affectation or offence, be represented as saluting him in the words of a fine imitator of Dante: — 'Rest in peace, dear companion of my woes and toils, until the great day when the majestic trumpet shall summon thee to arise! In the mean while, light be the turf about thee; gentle and pious, be the breezes and showers; and far be it from any passer-by to visit thee with an unkind word (1).' Whether, on their reu-

(1) Poscia l'ultimo sguardo al corpo affisse,
Già suo consorte in vita . . . .
Dormi in pace, dicendo, o di mie pene
Caro compagno, infin che del gran die
L'orrido squillo a risvegliarti viene.
Lieve intanto la terra, e dolci e pie
Ti sian l'aure e le pioggie, e a te non dica
Parole il passagier scortesi e rie!
La Morte di Bass-ville. Canto 1.

nion, the virtuous and beautiful spirit shall employ itself in beautifying its corporeal consort, and receive an increase of felicity from the occupation, is a speculation that will always interest mankind: although the shape in which we should put it may occasionally require changing; for fashion is often capricious in the dress, without alteration of the substance, of things. It is this same question which Dante starts (under a different form) when he asks, whether the evil spirit shall suffer more intensely when finding itself anew in conjunction with the body? For if this latter be demonstrated affirmatively, the former is so too. The spirit that is beautiful and virtuous will go on eternally increasing in beauty and virtue; and the deformed and wicked, in deformity and vice: the former will be always aspiring and attaining to higher beatitude; and the latter *voluntarily* (at least so Origen, as well as Dante held(1)) sinking into profounder misery. If the bodies of *these* are to partake of their immortal abjection, it follows that the bodies of *those* shall partake of their immortality, light, and bliss.

Q. —— CX.

It is an axiom of the Peripatetics that every animal in proportion as it reaches perfection is more sensible to joy, aud therefore to sorrow like-

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto III. p. 216.

wise; but morally and accurately, it is only in the former case that we can call it true perfection, for the latter is spurious perfection, or rather the superlative degree of imperfection. Philosophers affirm that the creature man, being compounded of body and soul, is naturally nearer his perfection when both are united properly (that is when the body is the servant of the soul), than when the soul is not incarnate; or rather it is asserted, that logically speaking the union of body and soul is necessary to human existence, and that the latter while deprived of the former is no longer in a state of man, but of widowhood: and therefore it is that Dante (who never fails to preserve a marvellous consistency in the minutest details of this long poem) took care to make Virgil say on his first appearance, that he is not now a man, though he once was such (1). S. Austin had thought proper to treat the question systematically, whether the word Man meant the soul, or the body, or both united: Homer and Plato were represented as at variance on the matter; Averroes plunged deep into the dispute; and at last the orthodox opinion both in logic and Divinity was decided to be, that by *Man* was to be understood a human body and human soul united together: anima rationalis et caro unus est homo. No doubt Dante wrote with this precision to record his sentiments on a point

(1) Inferno, Canto I. v. 67.

about which the literary people of his time condescended to dispute (1).

R. —— CXI.

This answer to Dante's question follows as a consequence from the ethics of his master, Aristotle, as we have observed. If it were necessary to quote Christian authority also, it is to be had in S. Austin; of whose words this verse is nearly a literal translation (2).

S. —— CXV.

Plutus, the mythological demon of riches, is to be the allegorical president over the next circle: and he may well be termed the 'mighty foe,' since money is the great cause of strife amongst men. 'The descent into each infernal circle' (it is Boccaccio that speaks) 'is introduced by some object or circumstance of accumulating terror, as an earthquake or demon, which serves the double purpose of inflicting horror on the new comer, and of informing those that inhabit that circle of the arrival of another victim; whose presence is to augment their sufferings by augmenting the general mass of iniquity: and this is the reverse of Purgatory; for there we shall meet a comforting

(1) Ascensius, Com. in Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 366. — De Civ. Dei, XIX.
(2) Cum fiet resurrectio carnis, et bonorum gaudia et malorum tormenta majora erunt. Id. Id.

angel at the entrance of each ascent (1).' Much confusion has arisen by the commentators not distinguishing between this golden devil, and the king of hell, and calling both Pluto. No such confusion is introduced by Dante himself; for he terms the king of Hell, Satano, Dite, Lucifero: and no better proof needs be of his considering the king of hell and this fiend of gold two different beings, than that we shall find the latter calling for assistance from the former in the first line of next Canto. In Italian it is easy to confuse them, because the distinction between the words Pluto and Plutone is small; and many writers have not chosen to observe it. But to translate this money-God's name into Latin Pluto, or into French Pluton, is surely an error; yet is it done lately by two Professors in France and Italy (2). In French and Latin, as well as in English, the name is Plutus, and in Greek Πλοῦτος (3); the king of hell is termed in English and Latin Pluto, and (at least generally) in Greek Ἅιδης or Πλούτων (4). *Pluto* was the son of Ops in Mythology and was

(1) Comento Vol. 1. p. 157.

(2) *Pluton* le grand ennemi préside au quatrieme. M. Ginguené, Hist. Litt. d'Italie, vol. 2. p. 54. — Hic *Plutonem* invenimus. Inf. trad. dal Dott. A. Catellacci, P. P. etc. etc.

(3) Πλοῦτος, *Plutus*, Deus divitiarum. Lexicon Ernest.

(4) Ἅιδης, Orcus, *Pluto* — Πλούτων, Dis, *Pluto*. Id. Id.

full brother to Ceres; *Plutus* was son of Ceres (1): the father of the one was Janus; of the other, Saturn (2).

(1) Η Δημήτηρ εγεννησε Πλοῦτον. Schol. Odyss. Lib. v. v. 125. — Janus ex Cerere *Plutum* genuit. Diodor. Sicul. Lib. vi.

Δημήτηρ μεν εγεινατο διὰ θεὰων

. . . . . .

Alma Ceres *Plutum* peperit conjuncta in amore

. . . . . Hesiod. — Nat. Com. Lib. 2. p. 178.

(2) *Plutonem* ac Cererem Saturnus genuit. Genealogia Deor. Lib. VIII. cap. 4. — Even Aquino is inaccurate here, for he translates Rex Erebi; and this is a title not appertaining to Plutus. — *Pluto*, quem infernorum Deum putarint antiqui, natus est ex Opi et Saturno. Nat. Comitis, Myth. Lib. 2. p. 173.

NOTE. I should have observed, Dante's vehemence against intemperance was, perhaps, heightened by his own habits; for these have more or less influence over our opinions. 'He was a man of singular sobriety both in eating and drinking: and, though he used to praise good cookery, he always chose for himself the plainest dish; and even of it eat most sparingly.' Jann. Manetti, Vita Dantis. p. 37.

COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE SEVENTH.

A. —— 1.

We now enter the fourth Circle or the domain of the wolfish demon, Plutus; where the slaves of money, both misers and prodigals, are seen rolling about and tilting at each other frightfully breast to breast (1). They are moreover so disfigured by filth, that Dante finds it impossible to recognise any one among them. From their shaven crowns however, he perceives the majority to be Churchmen. This inability to know individuals engages the travellers to descend into a lower circle; and they do so through a hole, or conduit, which receiving a cataract that falls from above (to wit the Acheron before seen by us in the Vestibule, and which appears to have taken an invisible course ever since) leads down to the lake of Styx. This lake is the fifth Circle; and walking round it they behold a ferocious crew floundering

(1) . . . . . *pugnantia secum*
Frontibus adversis . . . . non ego avarum
Cum veto te fieri, vappam jubeo aut nebulonem.
Hor. Sat. 1. Lib. 1.

therein: and at last, on approaching a tower, the Canto closes.

This fourth circle is, like the two preceding ones, without any division; and, like them, presents a circular way 17 ½ miles wide, with a walk 14 miles high on its exterior edge, and on its interior the brink of the Tartarean pit. There is a spot near this interior edge, which is rendered remarkable by a cleft wherein is a rush of waters; which, having kept an invisible conduit throughout the three first circles, now reveal it for an instant, and then continue their course.

I have premised, that both avarice and prodigality are punished here together: and, if there be a golden mean which is virtue, there is perhaps no more exemplary mode of inculcating it, than by thus subjecting its various violators to one and the same punishment. This indeed is true with regard to vices in general; they are extremes that not only deviate from the point of reason, but that in proportion to that deviation decrease, instead of increasing, their mutual distance; so the more they are removed from their common centre, the more they approach each other; and at last draw so near that it is difficult to distinguish which is which, the affinity twixt their most noxious qualities uniting them; and the consequent effects being very similar, or quite identical: thus luxurious delicacy and gross indelicacy are equally culpable, since when pushed to their

full, they both lead to the self-same ruin, that of brutalizing the mind and enfeebling the body. But though luxury have its opposite, and voluptuousness likewise (for man is bound to preserve his frame by a cheerful partaking of the gifts of God and nature — and increase and multiply is not less a command to most human creatures, because its fulfilment is recompensed in this existence by one of the purest of enjoyments, lawful love), yet the transgressions that really occur in this way are so few, and indicate such insanity, as not to merit notice in a didactic poem. And this is the reason why they were not inserted in the preceding circles of Tartarus: for as to those who so transgressed (or pretended to do) with still more vicious inclinations, hypocrisy, revenge, or contempt of Providence, their dens are below any thing yet come to. But that both deviations from the centre of virtue are wicked, can be predicated with regard to nothing more strikingly than to avarice and prodigality: these at a certain temperature become completely amalgamated, and circumstances occur in which their infamous produce is exactly the same hard-heartedness and villainy. The miser will do any bad or dirty action to get money, and so will the spendthrift; and it is very dubious which of the two is more guilty towards himself and the public — he whose hoarding deprives industry of its capital and corrupts his own mind by that sordid

occupation, or he who squanders his treasures in debauchery that unmans his soul and in inciting others to crime. From the former, it is in vain to expect charity, or honor in paying, or tenderness in requiring payment; and with regard to the other, the case is quite as hopeless: for though most lavish in indulging his own caprice, he is often to be found more shamelessly ungenerous towards a worthy object, than the miser himself — more tenacious of a trifle that would rescue a fellow-creature from misery, more dishonest as a debtor, more inhuman as a creditor. In the twentieth Canto of Purgatory we shall find those opposite failings again associated, and undergoing one chastisement. 'With the utmost justice' (says the Florentine Landino) 'was the demon of riches termed by our author, the *mighty foe:* for what else produceth such desolation upon earth? What causeth such discord between the nearest relatives and friends and fellow-countrymen? Such violations of equity? Such tumults, seditions, and civil and foreign wars? Such infesting of the seas with pirates, and of the land with highway-men! Such filling of cities with robberies, homicides, and murders, by poison, false-witnesses, and corrupt judgments? Such converting of fathers and husbands into domestic tyrants cruel to their wives and children and even to themselves? Such exposing to auction of the chastity of our virgins, and of all the decorums of life, public and private?

And such putting to sale of the very laws and magistrates? O money in different shapes these are thy doings! Oh! What a perpetuity of peace and virtue were amongst mankind, but for thee; who lettest none be content with what they legitimately possess, or with the acquisition of the little that sufficeth nature!'

Quid non mortalia pectora cogis
Auri sacra fames! —— (1)

B. —— 11.

The opening of this Canto was long an enigma explained in various capricious ways by various commentators: who all judged themselves at freedom to allow their fancies full rein on such a subject, and give what sense they pleased to a line which seemed to them to have none of its own. That scholars should have been so long duped, may be considered strange; yet it is much more so, that plain, but reasonable men should have condescended to bear their pertness, allowing them to sacrifice their Author in order to conceal their own ignorance, and to accuse him of indulgence in an unmeaning jargon, because they did not understand his language; —— a language, one of the grandest and probably the most ancient in the world. How unworthy alike of the poet and of his poem and of his readers were childish gab-

(1) Comento, p. 40.

ble! rendered still more ridiculous by his making the 'omniscient Gentile' (Virgil) understand it perfectly and reply to it at once. What a miserable compliment to represent him as comprehending and answering nonsense! Nonsense may intrude upon a writer, and be mistaken for something fine; but what is to be thought of him who knowingly introduces it into a serious composition for ornament? With this puerility has Dante continued to be taxed: and since it was not deemed an inconsistency "that such a king should play bo-peep," neither was he left unprovided of distinguished litterary characters, who blushed not to misemploy their ingenuity at different periods in labouring to unriddle sounds which they assured us had no real signification. One (1) tells us to receive it as a kind of bastard Gallicism, which Dante had learned in the French law courts, where the Crier endeavouring to maintain order and silence is continually calling out Paix, paix, Satan, allez, Satan, paix! That these words when written bear small resemblance to the text, or that it requires much faith to believe that Criers maintain throughout revolving centuries one uniform phrase in chiding the disorderly multitude, is unworthy of notice; every reader, I think, will concede this interpretation its proper praise of being burlesque. Others derive the line from a

(1) Cellini, etc.

most barbarous medley of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew barbarisms: for according to them, *pape* is an ejaculation of wonder and indeed nothing more than παπαὶ or papæ; in which, add they, Dante followed 'the example of Christians, who name the Pope *Papa*, because he is the most wonderful thing upon earth (1).' As to the word *aleppe*, they say that the poet wishing to express the interjection *Ah!* and finding it more convenient for the rhyme to use the first letter of the Hebrew, than the first of the Roman alphabet, assumed to himself the licence of substituting for *A*, *aleph;* and (again for rhyme sake) clipping the final *h* off both, and replacing it with *pe*, the Italian *Ah* became at last metamorphosed into *aleppe:* by how elegant a process, we may all judge. Hence they concluded, Plutus amazed at seeing the intruders, Virgil and his pupil, cries out 'Wonder, Satan! Wonder, Satan! Ah!' — One would think such a meaning might be as easily and efficaciously conveyed in some real tongue, as in an offensive jargon. But curious are the make-shifts to which a rhymester is supposed to be frequently reduced — aut insanit, aut versus facit; nor do I apprehend, that the rythmical mania ever bred any thing more ricketty than this thrice distorted

Ah! — *A!* — *Aleph!* — *Aleppe!;*

although he on whom it is fathered is recorded to

(1) Onde il sommo Pontefice, come cosa maravigliosissima tra Cristiani, è chiamato Papa. Landino, Comento, p. 40.

have declared, in a conversation a little before his death, that he had never once found himself constrained by an attention to rhyme to write a verse otherwise than he would have written it. The late learned Lombardi, though he assented in the main to the interpretation just given, proposed an amendment with regard to *aleppe;* for aleph, he observed, is never an interjection in Hebrew, but an adjective meaning *great:* so he contends that the whole is a soliloquy of Plutus who exclaims 'Wonder, Satan! Wonder, great Satan!' Herein he certainly does not accuse Dante of any more monstrous medley than had been attributed to him before; but rather the contrary, since he makes him give *aleppe* pretty nearly its legitimate signification: but by representing Plutus as *soliloquising and calling himself Satan*, he introduces an additional confusion; the one already pointed out in my last comment of the preceding Canto, that of indentifying the demon of riches with the king of hell.

Truth is, that all such conjectures are now worse than nugatory; for the verse in question is no medley of any kind, but a simple, uncorrupted Hebrew one; as, upon seeing it in its natural characters, Oriental scholars will avow at once. How far more generally versed in the languages of the East were the Italians of the middle ages than these of the present day, is historically proved: so that Dante's knowledge of Hebrew presents nothing

wondrous; rather the wonder would be, had he been devoid of that knowledge and yet translated the psalms as he did; but what most may make us wonder is that his crowds of Orientalisms could so long have escaped attention. Whether he was right in introducing foreign tongues into his poem with whatever grammatical accuracy, and in writing them all in the same characters; are two questions that may be discussed: but still I must premise that the opinion of Dante (let that of his readers be what it may) was deliberately in the affirmative; for we shall find him delivering, without once changing his Roman letters, not merely words and phrases and whole verses, (like this present one) but sometimes entire tiercets and even many tiercets together, not only in Hebrew and Arabic, but in Latin, Greek, French, German, etc. But whatever may be thought as to the propriety of clothing the verse before us in a strange dialect, there can be no demur as to the sublimity of the ideas it conveys, nor as to the vexation to be proved at finding such sublime ideas not merely not apprehended, but converted by dogmatical pretenders into very loathsome mummery. One of the best peculiarities of Dante's poetry is its true, tangible commonsense; and on few occasions is this more observable than on the present. Concede he might indulge in Roman-written Hebrew, and there cannot be a controversy as to the precision with which he fits it to his purpose; since

this evidently was to indicate the money-fiend's antiquity and foulness, by making him speak in what is usually believed to be the oldest discoverable language, and to be capable of the most discordant sounds. Thus, he intended to strike the illiterate by the horrible dissonance of the hell-wolf's scream, and the learned by its tremendous signification. Of this latter here is the substance. Plutus rendered furious by the intrusive boldness of a mortal, bellows down the infernal gulf for the king of the abyss (Satan) to put forth his fiery head and annihilate the intruder by a single glimpse of it; and such it were likely might have been the effect, had Satan put it forth now; since we shall hereafter find Dante (although he had acquired full experience of how innoxious to him were monsters and atrocities of hell) smote with such horror and dismay at the first appearance of the damned Monarch, that it were hard to tell whether he was alive or dead; a state that he expresses by the hyperbole of declaring he was neither (1).

פַּע פֶּה שָׂטָן פַּע פֶּה שָׂטָן אֶלֶף

Pa pe Satan! Pa pe Satan aleppe!

Risplendeat facies Satani! Risplendeat facies Satani primarii! Or, as in Italian: Ti mostra, Satanasso! Ti mostra nella maestà dei tuoi splendori, principe

(1) Io non morì', e non rimasi vivo.
Inferno Canto XXXIV. v. 25.

Satanasso! (1). 'Look out, Satan! Look out in the majesty of thy splendors, princely Satan!' What venerable concision is that of the Original! Two long lines —

Forth, Satan, forth! Thine awful forehead shine!
O princely Satan, for one gleam of thine! —

are scarcely a paraphrase.

The first observation that occurs, on looking at the above, is the almost miraculous fidelity with which the verse has been handed down during five centuries, by a multitude of copyists and printers not one of whom knew what they were doing. It is in general printed thus:

Pape Satan! pape Satan, aleppe!

Here we see are only two deviations from correctness: one of which (that of changing aleph into aleppe) was clearly introduced by the Author himself; and the second (that of making a single word of *pa* and *pe*) was most natural, particularly among people so inimical to monosyllables as the Italians. Aleph (אלף) has no reference whatever to the interjection *Ah*: but it is the first Hebrew element, and therefore denotes unity and pre-eminence, and is synonimous with the latin *primarius*. Nor is the adjective *chioccia* (that comes immediately after) properly interpreted as meaning *hoarse* (rauca); for its precise signification is *guttural* (gutturale), and no doubt but it was expressly

(1) Or exactly syllable by syllable: Splendi aspetto di Satano! Splendi aspetto di Satano primajo!

employed by Dante, as an exact linguist, to inform us of the true mode of pronouncing the words of Plutus who repeats so often that harsh guttural *ain* (ע), which is quite characteristic of the Hebrew (1).

That such is the clear, indubitable solution of the verse under consideration, all Hebrew students will aver; and their astonishment at this disclosure not having been made long since, may be somewhat mitigated by the reflection of how strange in our eyes becomes even the tongue with which we are best acquainted (then much more a dead one) if written in letters not its own. For

(1) I think it now superfluous to mention another attempt at interpreting this passage; wherein *aleppe* is derived from a provincialism of Val d'Arno It seems the country people there have a word of nearly similar sound to signify *flee* (fuggire); so that Plutus would be bidding Dante flee. But even were this interpretation less forced, it could merit no attention after the direct proof of the other: — which is corroborated by so many Hebrew translations and derivations up and down in Dante, and by those from the tongue most nearly related to it, the Arabic; as well as by an entire Arabic verse, which we shall find in Canto xxxi of this same Canticle; to none of which a provincial origin can be ascribed. The Hebrew scholar will observe that our Saviour himself uses *Sathan* for *Lucifer;* and that though *pe* means properly *mouth*, it may be taken in the larger sense of *front*, or *the entire countenance* — facies; and must be so on the present occasion, for we shall find Lucifer has *three* mouths. Ed è bene a rammaricarci de' *Retori*, ch' an uso nelle moderne scuole citare il *Pape* di Dante come verso da prendersi a beffe; *e Dio volesse che insegnassero a metter tanto concetto in un solo verso, quanto quel ne contiene: perciocchè non sarebbe sì folta la turba de' verseggiatori, che dalla prima Alpe all' ultimo Appennino con ventose parole rimbombano.* Dissertazione dell' Ab M. A. Lanci sui versi di Nembrotte, ec. p. 44. In fact, I have lately read a little M. S. tract, in which those *verseggiatori* are estimated as being never less than *three hundred thousand* between Naples and Milan.

example, many Englishmen travelling in Greece and finding in a Greek poem

Γλειδε ὠσεαν εὐθει εὐηυὶ βλυε

might give their assent to the opinion of the natives, that the line was a jargon put together in mere wantonness by the author; but should some one either luckier, or more attentive than his predecessors, pronounce it English, and, as a proof, transcribe it correctly

Glide, Ocean, with thy wavy blue;

adding that ευθει, for *with thy*, was so written to avoid monosyllables and not to repeat the *theta*, that in *Ocean* a sigma was substitued for c there being no *c* in the Greek alphabet, that εὐ is the dipthong most resembling our *w*, that the *a* in *wavy* is changed into η because such is its pronunciation, and that it is with the same attention to pronunciation that the *y* in *thy* is made ει, and that in *wavy*, *i*: I say that though here would be much more unavoidable alteration than in Dante's Hebrew, yet no Englisman coming after the first discoverer but would affirm the same, and treat every argument drawn from the improbability of the Greek poet's possessing any knowledge of English as ridiculous, when balanced with the other positive evidence; for it were certainly easier to believe that a Greek knew English (although there were no records to inform as that either he or any of his countrymen at that time did) than to persuade ourselves that a verse nei-

ther deficient in grammar or numbers should be produced by chance, and without its author being conscious of it. Let the present passage then be received as direct proof that Dante was tolerably versed in Hebrew: for although I know not to what amount his reputation as a poet may be concerned in the matter, it is certain that the conviction of his having been an Oriental scholar will assist us much in our criticisms, by letting us know where we are to seek for the elucidation of many a disputed phrase in his Divina Commedia, and in his version of the psalms for many a variation from the Vulgate. Let dispute about this passage end for ever: and if (as the Ab. Lanci's words imply) there be still a public Professor sufficiently shallow and pedantic to play the witling before his juvenile audience, and (God give him modesty!) attempt caricaturing this speech of the ancient bard, let him learn that henceforth such buffoonery can only have the effect of exposing his own want of taste and prudence, as well as of erudition. It is great, the Ab. Lanci's merit in doing this tardy service to the memory of his mighty countryman, and to his country, and (may I not add?) to the world at large; for can any be quite unintereste[d] in the removal of an aspersion from so eminent a fellow-creature, as Dante? Whether he composed this verse himself, or borrowed it from some work that he had perused, it equally follows that he must have had a very competent familiarity

with the language. In the first supposition indeed this would be more striking; for to combine in so narrow a compass so much force and pomp of thought, so perfectly adapted to the speaker and the occasion, and such a conflux of guttural letters and accurate syntax with a subserviency to the Italian rhyme, argues a person very conversant with the tongue which he employs. Heretofore when Orientalisms were averred to be detected occasionally in his phraseology, it used to be urged that he might have had them from the Paladins and Saracens then frequenting Europe. But this reply avails little or nothing; for in the first place, there is no reason to believe that those Paladins and Saracens had themselves any tincture of Hebrew; and even if they had, it must have been quite too small for the occasion. It could indeed have been only an oral smattering picked up among the Jews; though this supposition, of Mahometans and soldiers taking the trouble to do it, is less probable from the reflection that it was totally unnecessary for the purposes of common life, since the current dialect of those African Jews themselves was Arabic, not Hebrew. But to effect what is here performed (compose a Hebrew verse adapted to the occasion and write it in Roman characters) it were necessary that those rude soldiers knew not only Hebrew, but Italian perfectly well: and to what incongruous athesis that would lead, needs no notice. If the line was borrowed

from some book (a suspicion which I own myself inclined to indulge, though unable to verify) then its energy and grandeur, proving it to be from an Author nowise adapted to the capacity of a beginner, and the fact of no such book being known either to the learned Abate or to his readers, are both demonstrations of Dante's intimacy with Hebrew. In fact where is the wonder in his having studied the eastern tongues? He had more need of them than Milton; and Italy offered as many, or greater facilities towards acquiring them then than England in the seventeenth century. In the very year of Dante's birth (1265) a treaty between Pisa and Tunis was first drawn up in Arabic, and then turned by a Pisan into Latin. A short period earlier another Italian had translated an Hebrew tale, Culita and Duina; and another composed what argues vast Arabic erudition, a confutation of the Koran. In the middle of the twelfth century an inhabitant of Cremona translated Arabic treatises on Geometry and physics to the prodigious extent of 66 volumes, viz, the works of Avicen and Ptolemy. But what most clearly demonstrates the fact of Oriental acquirements being more common in Italy previous to 1200, than they have ever been since, is that up to that time the best Aristotles of the schools were in Arabic; for it was in that very year (as is recorded) that the first Greek Aristotle was imported into Italy, to S. Thomas Aquinas's great delight, who, being himself both a

Greek (for he had translated some of the Fathers and part of Plato into Latin) and Oriental scholar, saw at once the superiority of that Greek version over all the vulgar Arabic ones (1). Then what was in every other sense a revival of letters in Italy, in nowise contributed to one very noble study, that of the languages of the East, primary source of civilization; or rather it had a quite contrary effect, by turning public attention towards Greece and Rome exclusively; so that in almost as rapid a career as the other arts and sciences advanced, the knowledge of Hebrew and Arabic died away. Of the literary triumvirate, Dante alone seems to have retained any thing of it; for Petrarch and Boccaccio, immersed in the elegant philosophy of Socrates and Tully, neglected both the Bible and the Koran in their originals; or wholly taken up with the praises of a Sappho or a Lesbia, knew little or nothing of the Virgins of Paradise or the rose of Sharon. In this their meritorious, but too circumscribed devotion to the Classics, not only their immediate followers made it a point to rival them, but the bright spirits of Leo x, and indeed all Italian scholars (with a few exceptions) even down to the present day. Still allowing, that, at the sight of Rome in this her night making a discovery that had escaped notice in that her glorious sun-shine of the sixteenth century, we may feel

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto IV. p. 251. — and Tiraboschi and Gradenigo, passim. — Andres Letteratura, vol. 5. p. 520.

amazement, it can produce none, that Dante should have composed Hebrew at the epoch in which he lived, if there be now a Roman capable of interpreting it. Up to the birth of the former, the Oriental tongues were, as we have seen, to a considerable extent at least, a popular attainment in Italy; and this they never have been in England. Nevertheless Milton, when projecting his Christian poem, deemed it requisite to obtain a previous knowledge of Hebrew and in spite of innumerable difficulties did obtain it: then for Dante, who resolved upon not merely a Christian poem far longer and more peculiarly religious than the Paradise lost and regained, but on what necessarily demanded a thorough acquaintance with genuine Scriptural lore, a translation of the psalms, it was still more natural to desire to learn Hebrew, than for the other; and also easier for him to learn it, from the circumstances of the age (1). Milton, we know, became so ready with regard to that tongue that in his blindness he had a chapter of the Hebrew Bible read aloud to him every morning:

(1) Non dirò, ch'egli tale lingua col suo studio esaurisse, ma dirò che non l'ignorava del tutto. Dotato di straordinario ingegno, volendo eternare la memoria di se con una letteraria impresa, nella quale ogni savere apparisse, forse che dovea sgomentarsi di attendere anche a sua bella posta alcun poco alla cognizione di quelle lingue che dotte si appellano? Dante studiò tanto la Bibbia, che molte sue locuzioni, e forse le più poetiche sono tolte dalla espressione orientale... e ben lo conosce chi quel linguaggio assapora. Dissertazione dell' Ab. M. A. Lanci, p. 38.

no such anecdote of Dante's private life has reached us, but by this Hebrew verse we may consider his proficiency to be proved equally well, as that of our own bard by his facility in understanding what he heard read by his daughters. As to internal evidence in their compositions, whatever Orientalisms the English of Milton may be held to contain, such vestiges are far less significant or numerous there, than in the Italian of Dante: for, not to anticipate many we shall hereafter find in this poem, nor to repeat any thing already noticed, it will suffice to observe that in his version of the psalms I have myself been able to discover above a dozen instances, in which he leaves the Vulgate to follow the original Hebrew. It were just to transport our imagination back to his age, before pronouncing on the propriety, or impropriety, of his inserting a variety of languages (as he has done) into this poem. He found his country without a formed tongue, as well as without much real science; but it is not true that she was without the rudiments — the disjecta membra of multifarious literature; his duty as a good citizen was to put these together and make the most of them. Of the state in which he found and left natural and moral philosophy, this is not the place to speak: but as to languages, he found native Italian in the embryo of a quantity of dialects, many of them very rude and none of them grammatical, and the foreign tongues of Provence,

Greece, Rome and the East all extant in Italy, in some degree, though in various conditions. The first of them appears to have been a fashionable accomplishment in the different courts; of Latin and Greek we have already said something (1), and shall more; and to Arabic our attention shall be drawn on a future occasion, when I shall have to comment a verse written in it. That he should have considered it right to enrich his style by the adoption of many Hebraic idioms, and to recommend by his example the continuance of a study already begun with some success (that of the speech in which were to be found the purest and primitive sources of Christianity) was both equitable and highly decorous; and was not certainly to interfere with the other branches of learning, for all these have a close affinity. With regard to his *translated* Hebraisms, I presume there can be no diversity of sentiment; but that every one will avow he was as justified in employing them as the Spaniards were in adopting Arabic idioms: for thus in his country's language, which he found so meagre, he kneaded up with such care the best of it's own numerous dialects and many foreign ones, that he left it richer than any other of modern Europe. Whether his introduction of *pure* Hebrew into his Italian can be equally well borne out, may be questioned: but if, (for the sake of

(1) Hell, Comment, Cantos III—IV—V pp. 199—251—279.

holding out an example to Oriental students) it be considered an admissable license, then on no possible occasion could it be so plausibly introduced as on the present. For in no mouth could the characteristic harshness of the Hebrew be more becoming, than in that of the 'swoln lipt' (quella enfiata labbia), wolfish Plutus; nor any fiend be with greater reason represented as uttering the most ancient language of which we have any remains. That Dante believed the Hebrew to be the most ancient, we have his own words in more than one passage of his Grammar: 'Hebrew was the tongue of the first man (1).' Nor should any one suppose that this is in contradiction with the declaration which we shall find him cause Adam to make, that the language which he used was 'all worn out' (tutta spenta (2)) before the building of Babel; for it shall appear, that this is to be understood as a kind of poetical hyperbole, not as an absolute affirmation: it only signifies that Hebrew, which at first was universally spoken, had already fallen from its purity before the great confusion of tongues. But that, however corrupted, it was not extinguished, either before or after the tower of Babel, (being still transmitted by the Jews) we know to have been a thesis formally sustained by our Author; since he thus expresses

(1) Fuit ergo Hebraicum idioma id, quod primi loquentis labia fabricaverunt. De Vulgari Eloquio, Lib. 1. cap. 6.

(2) Parad. Canto XXVI. v. 124.

himself in the same grammatical essay mentioned immediately above: 'this form of speech which had been spoken by Adam, and by all his children until the building of Babel, descended as a peculiar inheritance to the Hebrews, in order that our Saviour, when born among them, might speak not the language of confusion, but of beauty and grace. The chosen few to whom this sacred idiom was intrusted were of the seed of Sem, from whom proceeded the people of Israel, who down to the moment of their dispersion continued to employ this most ancient of tongues (1).' This opinion recorded so tenaciously is referable to the controversy between scholars, as to whether the books of Moses were originally written in Hebrew, or Chaldaic: it appears to be in order to decide in favour of the former, that Dante asserts its superior antiquity; and not from a wish to pronounce between the Syriac, Samaritan, and Phænician, which be apparently considered as only dialects

(1) Hac forma locutionis locutus est Adam; hac forma locuti sunt omnes posteri ejus usque ad ædificationem turris Babel; hanc formam locutionis hæreditati sunt filii Heber, qui ab eo dicti sunt Hebræi. 'Each class of workmen' (he says) 'was inflicted with a separate language; bricklayers with one, carpenters with another, etc. In proportion to their alacrity in building, was the deformity of the tongue allotted to them. With a few who took no part in the fabric the *sacred idiom* was still left.' Quibus autem sanctum idioma remansit ... hæc minima pars fuit de semine Sem ... de qua ortus est populus Israel qui antiquissima locutione sunt usi usque ad suam dispersionem. De Vulgari Eloquio, Lib. 1. cap. 6—7.

of Hebrew; as indeed they probably were (1). It is curious to observe how frequently is the proverb exemplified of there being nothing new under the sun! A solemn proposal, of which the Edinburgh Review (2) speaks highly, has been made to the Asiatic Society by a learned peer of France and member of the *Institut*, to adapt the Roman letters to the various Oriental languages (3). But I dare say, M. de Volney was little aware that his plan had been put into practice so many ages since; and that of the five tongues, Persian, Turkish, Syriac, Arabic, and Hebraic, which he writes in European characters, the old Tuscan poet had already preceded his invention with regard to two — the two principal of them. Whether such a device be approved of or not, as likely to be of any general benefit either to science or commerce, the defence of Dante in his particular circumstances rests upon more substantial ground, that of experience. For to nothing else than its being written as it was, can we attribute the preservation of his verse down to this day: had the copyists been doomed to labour at words, of which not only the meaning was hidden to them, but with whose letters they were also unacquainted, it would have been altogether impossible for

(1) Of these Contiguous Countries the letters and the language, always analogous, were once probably the same. Ed. Rev. No. LXIV.

(2) Id. Id.

(3) L'Alphabet Européen appliqué aux langues Asiatiques, etc. Par C. F. Volney, Comte et Pair de France et membre de l'Institut.

any intelligible traces to have been retained; and the Divine Comedy would have been really disfigured with the ridiculous mummery of which it has been so ridiculously accused. As things stand however, it is credible that we have the Hebrew verse free of any adulteration, and precisely as it came from the Author's pen; which is more than can be said of much of the Italian. His own expectations might have been still more flattering; and when he used these letters through condescension to the illiterate (who might have been disgusted at strange hieroglyphics totally illegible to them, but not so at a barbarous exclamation which they could read though without understanding it, that inhuman dissonance being uttered by a fiend) I dare say he thought they would be no secret to the learned; and, universal learning increased, it was not unnatural if he believed that his Hebrew would not only be explained, but at last be transcribed in its original form. As to the conservation of his verse, arguing thus, we see he argued rightly; but not so, as to the flourishing of the tongue in which it was composed. Petrarch and Boccaccio instead of improving on his example, and so gathering in all the springs of ancient lore, turned the stream of fashion in a beautiful but narrowed channel; and consequently the erudition of the East has almost dried up, not acquired force, in Italy. The illiterate solution, which it is probable Dante meant as a mere temporary tribute to

the ignorance of his age, has not only contented his countrymen ever since, but when at last the discovery of the truth is made and published, they are so unprepared to appreciate it, that it is slightly or not at all mentioned in two or three editions of the Divine Comedy made quite recently: and my own (I mean this Comment) will be the first to present it in its clear light. Let then their bard have justice, albeit tardily, done to him: and without pretending that his Orientalisms enhance his reputation as a poet, let him have credit for something superior to any gifts of imagination —— devoted patriotism and learning; for the first may be given in vain, but each of the two latter argues virtuous cultivation of the mind. These engaged him to employ various incentives to quicken his fellow-citizens to knowledge and wisdom; and one road to wisdom was certainly to study the compositions of Asia, the birth-place of their religion and of every art and science: for if with a similar patriotic intention we shall find him citing the Provencal, we must acknowledge that it agreed better with his own taste to cite Hebrew; since, though the former might have been more fitting for the intellects of his audience, and pleasing to his ear from its melody, it could never have been the favourite language of one, who, though sweet and tender when he pleased, was much oftener sublime; and who therefore rather belonged to the schools of Greece and of the East, than of France;

his Muse having far less relation to the playfulness of the sentimental Troubadours, than to the great epic and Biblical writers, whom he rivals in the union of daring fancy with profound scientific meditation.

C. —— VIII.

This expression 'Wolf' directed to Plutus, the God of the Avaricious, proves Dante's distinct desire to prevent his being confounded with Pluto: for the *Wolfish* shape of the former is as remote as can be, from the giant bulk and all the infernal magnificence with which the latter is invested:

Now wave the banners of the king of Hell (1).

D. —— XII.

As we descend, the guilt of the sufferers deepening leaves less room for commiseration: so that, although Virgil's reply to Plutus be similar in substance to that already made to Charon and Minos(2), it is no longer limited (as it was then) to a bare sublime assertion of omnipotent will, but adds contempt and menace, and reminds the fallen Cherub of

. . . . . the sword
Of Michael from the armoury of God.

The answer also, by naming Plutus 'the swoln-

(1) Hell, Canto XXXIV.
(2) Inferno, Canto III. v. 94. — Canto V. v. 23. Hell, Comment to Id. Id. pp. 205 — 277.

lips' and 'the cursed wolf,' gives an idea of his form which corroborates the interpretation given of the she-wolf in Canto the first (1). As to the difference of sex, it only adds edge to the satire; and the 'coupling obscene' (molti son gli animali a cui s'ammoglia) of the one, and this 'whoredom proud' (superbo strupo) of the other, whose train is represented formed of 'Popes and Cardinals,' (as we shall see presently) testify that the ideas of avarice, wolfishness, lewdness, and a celebrated passage of the Apocalypse (2) were on every occasion connected in Dante's head, as referable to the rapacity of many unworthy Popes.

E. —— XV.

This tiercet, in the Original, is one of those noted by Alfieri as most beautifully imitative.

F. —— XVI.

The Italian is *lacca:* about the etymology of which there is much controversy, although the *Vocabolario* takes no part in it. Landino derives it from the Latin verb *labor*, Velutello from the *Lombard* dialect, others (quoting Dufresne) make it *low Latin;* and I myself had imagined it taken from the Greek λαχὶς, scissura, fissura cum crepitu facta (3): but it is now decided, it is an Orienta-

(1) Comment, p. 30.
(2) Rev. XVII. 1, 2, 3.
(3) Lexicon Ernest.

lism (1). The sense however remains, in all the cases where we shall find the word, pretty much the same; here *quarta lacca* evidently signifies the *fourth Circle*. What is turned by me into 'down we plunge mid deeper throes' (in the text, prendendo più della dolente ripa) gives ground for hesitation to some; but, in my opinion without any reason: for *ripa* is put with poetical freedom for *regione;* and then the clear meaning is 'achieving more of the dolorous region' or' descending still deeper into hell.'

G. —— XVIII.

Now down we plunge 'mid wilder throes,
Entering the fourth infernal stew
Deep in the sack of universal woes.

This '*sack*' (che'l mal dell' universo tutto insacca) refers naturally to the entire of the 'Hell-of-the-damned'; which is to contain eventually (since it does not so at present) all the evil which afflicts the universe. Some however, with over-scrupulous nicety of syntax, refer 'sack' to its' immediate antecedent 'the fourth stew' (quarta lacca); and thus make Dante affirm, what may seem rather hyperbolical, that *all* the vices of mankind are caused by money. Yet had such been really his intention, it were hard to prove it distant from truth, at least in modern history. To what but

(1) Ab. M. A. Lanci, ut supra.

avarice or prodigality are the worst of our political convulsions ascribable? If man be made for society, (and that he is, one may be excused proving) then must every thing that really cements it be for his weal, and every thing tending to dissolve it, for his unhappiness. Nothing has this latter, miserable tendency so much as the inspiring of individuals with a feeling that they are independent of the community in which they live. True philosophy teaches, that men have little cause to be vain of their individuality. Considered as mere individuals, and without reference to any proposed end in our creation, other animals equal, if not surpass us. What confers grandeur on our species is to represent it as a corporate body, which ceases to exist, as soon as it ceases to be united. Many creatures go alone, and to continue their kind have need of no more than a periodical, momentary interview between two of different sexes. Could man be reduced to a similar state, he would be far inferior to most animals. It is in society that he becomes evidently and infinitely superior to them all. We are then nothing more than fragile links of one bright universal chain, and (in spite of ingenious rhapsodies) it is in the order of nature which is welfare, that we should continue dependant on our fellow-creatures, and they on us. It is almost exclusively by money that such salutary dependence is dissolved; and whether it be care in the acquisition or in the preservation or in the

consumption of riches that be uppermost in our thoughts, it is alike subversive of patriotism. One tie broken, others soon follow: but the more you weaken the voluntary connexion between individuals, the stronger the force necessary to preserve peace between them; the more independent each becomes, the more despotic must the Government become, if it is intended to administer justice; and as soon as all the natural links of society are spurned, there remain none that can preserve it except unnatural ones. Wherever there has been most individual dependence, there has been most National liberty: And when to the public devotedness of the Ancients is substituted an attachment to private lucre — when submission of the will is no more — when (men receding to a mighty distance from the Patriarchal system) attachment to birth-place and family decays — when agriculture yields in dignity to manufactures — when the endearing, reciprocal reliance between landlords and tenants vanishes — when merchants become over-numerous, who (bearing their fortunes in their pockets and educating their itinerant offspring in utter indifference to customs and sojourns) consider as home any sea-port on the globe which may answer their momentary interests — when town-frequenting nobility begin to leave the provinces desolate — when the Capital is filled with extravagant dissipation and the most iniquitous usury — when respect

for station disappears, and rapacious buying, borrowing, lending, selling, and intriguing for places are the usual occupations of all classes of the people: then is experienced the entire truth of what I say, that much individual independence is not compatible with civil liberty, and leads of necessity to one or all of these slaveries (each ruthless and ignominous, and more ruthless from being alternate) the ferocity of anarchy, of oligarchy, or of despotism. More properly, this last is the term in every such case: the only difference is between the despotism of one, or of few, or of many. Which of these horrible gulfs is less heart-chilling, I scarcely know or care: but if they are all brought about by money, it were no libel to call it 'the sack of universal woe.' By it we are betrayed into that appalling circle which knows no redemption (anarchy, oligarchy, despotism, anarchy, oligarchy, despotism) and to whose hopeless nature nothing is more applicable than Dante's own verse

Lasciate ogni speranza voi che 'ntrate.

If a large portion of Europe be thus fallen, America may consider the ghosts of her murdered sons as laid, — as far as vengeance can do it. Her gold has amply retaliated her wrongs; and has had a vast share in producing the general corruption of European politics. It has transferred the destinies of men from their own good swords to a banker's quill, has turned war into a question of finance,

and made the funds sole criterion of its justice or injustice; in lieu of the cry of patriotism are heard the prognostics of the stock-broker; and for valour and constancy, the state of the exchange. How far this despicable disease has hitherto succeeded in breaking up society, I need not inquire; but that to it, much more than to any intemperate theories of sceptics or materialists, are to be ascribed the worst disasters of the past century, I have no difficulty in asserting.

I have strayed from the literal interpretation of the text; not from its spirit. Dante foresaw the ruin which Plutus was bringing on his country: and its actual state is a complete verification of my reasonings. There is no where more individual independence than in Italy; no where less political freedom. The links of society hang so loosely, that they are scarcely felt by individuals; while the nation is in hopeless thraldom — hopeless not on occount of the governors, but the governed. Sismondi undertakes a difficult cause, when he would make the mercantile body more friendly to liberty than the proprietors of the soil. The latter (he says) must crouch to the enslaver of their native land to which they are irremediably attached; while the former fly from it, and seek for freedom elsewhere. But what kind of patriotism is that which flies from its country in her utmost distress? Such egoists are incapable of being real freemen: and are much more likely to

sow the seeds of slavery in each free shore to which they resort, on account of those commercial advantages which liberty always possesses; and from which shore they will quickly retire, on those advantages diminishing by the breaking out of that pestilential slavery of which they had themselves imported the first germ — a selfish, insatiable thirst of gold. Instead of bearing freedom, they bear its bane; their circumnavigation is infection. According to M. Sismondi's theory, they must have long since fled from Italy; but they first ruined her. It was a merchant who openly enslaved her most flourishing Republic — Florence. In a great country there is full room for both the followers of commerce and the landed proprietors. Why represent their interests at variance? Their true interests are essentially the same: it is unjust to both to undervalue either. Practically, a wise legislature will preserve as much as possible an equality between them — the rapidly accumulating riches of one class being balanced by the hereditary honours of the other: but in speculation, the natural defenders of the soil must be avowed to be the owners of the soil, and real patriots those who have no hopes beyond their country; not men who are ready to seek another home, and retire before slavery instead of hazarding a mortal combat.

H. —— xxi.

The tiercet literally is: 'Ah! heavenly Justice, who can put together all the new labours and sufferings which I beheld? Why doth a mortal error produce such ruin?'——The first part refers to the impossibility of describing in a few verses the various horrors that presented themselves. Some make *who* refer to the Dispenser of those torments: but it could not have been meant to ask who he is, since the exclamation itself begins by telling us —— 'heavenly Justice,' giustizia di Dio (1). The second part of the tiercet embraces a far more momentous question —— the doctrine of future rewards and punishments; a discussion so awful and complex, that it is a consolation to defer, if not entirely escape it. Recollecting Dante's own words, it is the primary, *allegorical* scope of the entire poem to elucidate it (2). Waving for the present the main subject —— conceding the exis-

(1) The verse is printed as an interrogation in the Cominiana and all the most esteemed editions; as indeed, the particle *chi* requires. Yet M. Cary translates it like a mere exclamation, adducing Landino as his authority, who makes chi the same is che. Landino's words are not very clear. The two contested interpretations are as I have given: chi potrebbe ristringere in pochi versi, ec.? or chi raduna in questo luogo dell' inferno tanti travagli ec? This second is subject to the objection adduced by me — that of putting a question which the very first words of the tiercet preclndes, as well as the context of the entire poem: quasi che Dante, o non sapesse, o negasse essere la divina vindice Giustizia che ivi aduna tutti quei guai. Poggiali, Ed. Livorn. 1807, vol. 3. p. 93.

(2) Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 63.

tence of the eternal castigations of Tartarus — I descend to a corollary from it. The text being in the singular number 'a mortal error' (nostra colpa) appears to some to be a demand, whether it be possible that a single error can merit such varieties of ever-lasting torment? Infinite woe can only be made for infinite crime. This is certain. After this, it is superfluous to distinguish between singular and plural. Of degrees in infinitude we can have no idea. According to human comprehension, we can scarcely avoid assenting to the position of the Stoics, that all crimes are equal; except by doing, what seems to me much wiser, — confessing we know nothing of the matter. It may be *practically* useful to pronounce on the extent of any guilt from what we see of it; on such appearances the legislator must act — the temporal by the infliction of temporal punishments, the spiritual by the threat of future ones; but *theoretically*, few things lead to greater confusion in reasoning. It is the invisible mind that makes the sin, not the visible act. But since the act of the mind precedes the visible act, the entire guilt is equally incurred, whether it be indicated by any act visible to us, or not: still more does it follow, that if the entire guilt may exist previous to *any* visible act, it may previous to *several*. The eye of HIM who is to judge immaterial creatures has no need of material acts. It reads the spirit, and may or may not permit good or evil to be re-

vealed by one or many overt, corporeal actions. In every case the merit or demerit of the spirit (which is truly the only merit or demerit) remains precisely the same. The law, that is the will of an eternal infinite Being must be infinite and eternal. Its prescriptions may vary, but they are only its form. Its substance can know no change. As long as those prescriptions exist, they partake of the infinitude that prescribes them. To contravene them then is infinitely wrong; nor in that infinitude can I have a notion of any gradations. These may, perhaps, exist; but my finite powers cannot conceive them. If an infinite Being ordains a statute (whatever it seem in our eyes, great or small) it must be infinite, and any breach of it be infinite too; nor can I have any conception of its deserving more or less than infinite punishment; in which I can recognise no degrees either of alleviation or severity. Such degrees may be; but they are not within the grasp of mortal perception. The only question then is whether an infinite Being has given a law, or not. If he has, it is a line in the 'over-stepping of which (and in it alone) guilt consists; and however you advance after; this advance' (Cicero avers) 'has nothing to do with your over-stepping of the line. In this consists guilt, in the infraction of the law (without a reference to its apparent importance or unimportance); and when once this infraction takes place, the guilt is completed. Every sin

overturns reason and order: but as soon as order and reason are overturned, I cannot imagine the addition of any greater sin (1).' I only speak of what *seems;* and indeed so does Cicero. But it *seems* as if one crime should incur infinite punishment, just as much as many; and as if the plucking of a blade of grass, or of an apple were quite as criminal when prohibited by the Creator, as any enormity whatever. This is the sublime verity shadowed forth by the catastrophe of Eve: and such a reflection (*independent* of every other) might suffice to secure veneration for the magnificent simplicity of the Genius, who put the whole world and an apple in one and the same balance, and found them of equal weight in the estimate of Omnipotence.

I. —— XXIV.

Not wild Charibdis, when the wildest masses
Of breakers combat in its pool renown'd,
Chafes like the innumerous troop that waltzes.

The misers and the prodigals drawn up face to face, one party on the interior circumference of the Circle (that is, round its central orifice) and the other on its exterior circumference (or under

(1) Quam longe progrediare, cum semel transieris, ad augendum transeundi culpam nihil pertinet.... In eo est peccatum, quod non licuit. Cum quidquid peccatur, perturbatione peccatur ordinis atque rationis. Perturbatâ autem semel ratione et ordine, nihil potest addi quo magis peccare posse *videatur*. Par. v.

its wall), they ever and anon charge at each other with furious cries, and, meeting mid-way, strike breasts and rebound back to their former lines; where they prepare for similar encounters to be followed by similar discomfitures. Such, in substance, is the meaning of the present and following tiercets. During this eternal tilting (*giostra*) the shades also eternally move, or whirl like Charibdis during that violent concussion of its tides called by seamen its rintoppo (1), or rather *waltze*, (as I translate it) that is, perform the *ridda* round the entire Circle. For the *riddi* of the text is from the verb *riddare*, '*to dance the ridda;*' and the *ridda* was 'a dance of many persons turning round' — which is about the same thing as a *waltze* (2).

X. — XXVII.

'Turning weights by force of breasts' is the original, verbatim; and it is indeed (as is also my

(1) Mr. Cary in translating onda not a mass of billows, but "a billow," diminishes much the propriety of the metaphor: and the more so, because Dante by onda s'intoppa alluded to a characteristic phenomenon of the straits of Messina, which he must have observed when he was Ambassador in Sicily. Not always, but frequently when the wind blows freshly from either the South or North-east, the currents meet with perilous but transient violence and are then said to *intoppare*. So, to warn ships not to approach while the danger lasts, there is (or at least was) a tall signal-tower where pilots are employed to keep a good look out. These being experienced, always can predict the *rintoppo* a little before it happens. E in questo modo sicuro è il passaggio. Daniello, Comento, p. 49.

(2) Ballo di molte persone fatto in giro. (Vocabolario). It seems to have been a lascivious dance, which was at last left to the peasantry, and is now no onger in use.

translation) capable of two interpretations: for it may mean, either that each wretch had a stone, like Sisyphus, to roll with his breast; or that the weights in question were simply those of each ghost's own form, as well as that of his antagonist's, which, on the shocking of their mutual breasts, spun round. The former of these is the received solution and in many editions there is an engraving to elucidate it: but I myself prefer the latter; for, besides that *tilting*, *waltzing* and *spinning like a whirl-pool* make quite images enough for one passage, these ideas of speed and lightness are not aided, but rather enfeebled by that of rolling huge stones. To talk of the *weight* of the spirits implies no more incongruity than to talk of their *turning weights;* of the suffering of their breasts when striking together, no more than when striking against the stones. Poets are permitted to attribute corporeal functions to spiritual creatures, as well as to strip them of them when they please; for it were otherwise very hard to give a detailed picture of the joys or sorrows of spirits. Thus we find Atrides, in the self-same sentence, represented as an empty shade endeavouring vainly to embrace Ulysses, and as letting fall a shower of tears like one still incarnate (1). The introduction of Charibdis into the present Canto, as a simile, is recognised as still more apposite,

(1) Odyssea, Lib. XI. v. 390—4.

if we remember, that some commentators of the Aeneid affirm that Virgil intended that whirlpool as allegorical of avarice:

> . . . . . latus lævum implacata Charibdis
> Obsidet, atque imo barathri ter gurgite vastos
> Sorbet in abruptum fluctus, rursusque sub auras
> Erigit alternos, et sidera verberat undâ (1).

L. —— xxx.

'Why keep your hands so clenched?' cry the prodigals to the misers: 'Why yours so carelessly open?' reply the misers to the prodigals. This is the literal signification of the text. For as to the first question: though 'why keep?' (perche tieni?) is all that is actually expressed, I am entirely of M. Biagioli's opinion that the 'clenched hand' (pugno chiuso) of verse LVII is to be understood. It gives precision to the picture. Those who explain it, 'why keep fast your riches?' retain the substance of the meaning certainly, but without any metaphor; and besides they give something of looseness to the phrase, for as the misers have no 'riches' in hell, the present tense must thus be put for the past. Such as render it 'why keep back my weight?' throw (to borrow an expression from M. Biagioli) a mortal coldness over the whole composition (2): and I may add, they make it *necessarily*

(1) Aeneid. Lib. III. v. 420.

(2) . . Sparge in tutto il quadro un ghiaccio mortale. Biagioli, Comento, Vol. I. p. 143.

imply that the shades were rolling stones, which, as I have already observed, the original does not absolutely oblige us to understand, and which it is simpler not to understand. With regard to the second question (perchè burli?): it is proper to remark that both the etymology and metaphorical meaning of the verb *burlare* are contested. The Vocabulary gives neither; but contents itself with the literal explanation 'to squander prodigally (1).' Velutello derives it from *burella*, which in the Lombard dialect means a little ball usually tied to the tail of a monkey to prevent its running away; whence the proverb 'wherever the monkey goes there goes also the burella.' Hence *burlare* signifies to let any thing *slip from your fingers;* as the small, round *burella* would from a careless hand. Landino seeks for it in another provincialism, *buiare*, by which the people of Arezzo mean *gettare* or 'throw away'. Some interpret it *roll;* but the signification they give is the dullest of any — making it 'why roll your weight?' in reply to 'why keep back my weight?' The exact history of *burlare* is certainly to be looked for in the East (2). My idea of the whole passage is then, that Dante intended to represent those mad ghosts as jolting at each other with unspeakable fury, one party

(1) Gittar via, usar prodigalmente § 1. Thus Mr. Cary translates: but though his "why castest thou away?" preserves the sense, it does not the imagery — the poetry of the text.

(2) Ab. M. A. Lanci, Dissertazione, ec. p. 39.

having their hands extended rigidly and the other nervously contracted, so that the force with which their breasts struck, sent each of them spinning back to his pristine post. This is clearer and simpler and (at least it seems so to me) more in the style of my Author, than to diversify (may I not say, clog?) the sketch with the introduction of huge stones. I repeat, 'turning weights' is all that is in the original. I may suppose them what weights I please: and in making my choice recollect simplicity is one of Dante's characteristics.

. . . . . .

Spinning their weights around, around,
While breasts strike breasts with pangs condign.
Ho! charge, hurra, jolt, bound, rebound!
Ho! foe to foe, and line to line!
Each cursing each, and madly crying
"Why closed thy palm?" "why open thine?"
Then thwart the sooty cavern flying
Still, still they bandy railing, raging,
That savage taunt that fierce replying;
And face about and form —— engaging
For ever in that rude, unvaried tilt.

M. —— XXXIII.

The ontoso metro of the Italian means the contumelious language which they directed against each other; and which the poet does not condescend to specify. All he repeats is the burthen of their mutual reproaches, perchè tieni? ec. Virgil

is next asked whether 'all those tonsured things' (questi chercuti) which are seen were clergymen?

N. —— XL.

Virgil's reply is twofold. The first part is not an answer to Dante's question: but tells him that all the occupants of this circle, whether misers or prodigals, were alike '*mentally blind* (1)' on earth (in la vita primaja); and that the opposite nature of their guilt is plainly expressed by their 'rival howl' as to their clench'd and open hands. I may add (what I seldom do) a grammatical observation on the word ferci in v. XLII; because to understand the last syllable ci as a mere expletive particle, is a slur upon the writer. The commentators are too fond of making him distort words for the sake of rhyme. This ci is an adverb meaning *there*, and is almost necessary to render the syntax plain; it refers to vita primaja (2): 'they were so blind of the mind on earth, that they kept no order in their expenses there.' This *there* renders the whole passage clearer, by showing they had no riches either to hold or cast away *here* below in hell;

(1) Mr. Cary does not even attempt preserving this fine expression—guerci della mente. Shakespere's example might have emboldened him to do so —

Ham.... Methinks, I see my father.
Hor. O where, my lord?
Ham. In my mind's eye, Horatio. Hamlet. Act. 1. Scene. 2.

(2) Biagioli, Comento, Vol. 1. p. 144.

and thus corroborates my former observations on perchè tieni? (1).

O. —— XLVI.

This is the second, and direct part of the reply to Dante's demand. 'All those whose crowns appear shaven were Popes and Cardinals; for it is with regard to these that avarice uses its fullest measure (2).' Lombardi accuses the Academy of introducing the false reading of 'uses' (usa) instead of (usò) 'used;' but in this he seems to be very wrong. 'It was not merely on the authority of the majority of M. S. S. nor to avoid elision of an accented vowel (for that such a poetic licence was sometimes admissable, they well knew), but because the context pointed it out as the true reading, that the Academicians preferred it. The clerical delicacy which thus interposes to lessen the '*scandal*' of Dante is futile; except it could at the same time erase the other much harsher invectives, which are up and down in the poem, against the clergy of his day. He must be justified not by softening down his expressions, but by showing he had reason to employ the harshest: and that his great ancestor tells him positively to speak *the whole truth without reserve* (3).'

(1) p. 428.

(2) *Soverchio*, quasi andante sopra lo cerchio, cioè all'orlo del vaso. Biagioli, Comento, Vol. 1. p. 146. Mr. Cary leaves out this metaphor. Neither does he introduce the characteristic term '*tonsures*' (chercuti) any where in his version of the passage.

(3) Paradise, Canto XVII. — Biagioli, Comento, vol. 1. p. 146.

That a monstrous portion of the Catholic clergy, though free from the cares of wife and family, had so far receded from evangelical simplicity during several ages previous to the reformation, as to be a class notorious for avarice and prodigality, is a fact not more severely denounced by any than by Catholic writers themselves; and it is to those vices some of them attribute the reformation. 'Irresistible is the impulse' (says Madame de Staël) 'which men of talents feel to attack the strongest; and such indeed is the sign by which we may ever distinguish the effervescence of real genius.' When therefore we recollect the potency of the Church in Dante's day and his own rigid morals and profound piety, it is no wonder that he expressed himself with vehemence against Priests, Cardinals, and Popes; if their conduct was really ruinous to the State and disgraceful to religion. 'It was holy and honest indignation,' writes Landino, 'that made both Dante and Petrarch thunder against the dignitaries of their own communion. But Alas! the evils they combated exist still: for who does not behold men — rather brutes than men — without either learning or morals, who, though too ignorant and vicious to merit a curacy in the smallest village, are raised to elevated stations; which they prostitute in the vilest manner, amassing with most exorbitant avarice, by the most atrocious injustice, huge treasure; and soon spending it prodigally in such unheard-of debauchery

and revels, that in comparison with them Sardanapalus and Heliogabalus were temperate Saints (1)?' —— 'If there exist in the world' (exclaims Boccaccio) 'people immersed beyond all measure in avarice they are our great Prelates; who give, nay fling away Archbishoprics, Bishoprics, Abbeys, and the other benefices of our sacred Church upon idiots, drunkards, gluttons, and wicked furious men contaminated with every description of enormous vice; and these they are who lead Christendom to hell (2).' This religious poet might well then have expressed himself as he did. But another line of Madame de Stael's ——'actions and writings should be judged with a reference to their dates'—— may imply that his asperity would have been otherwise directed, had he lived nearer to the present time. Wherever vice appeared with the most triumphant effrontery, thither would have been pointed his dauntless, heaven-inspired pen. Wherever justice was most grossly outraged, whether under pretence of religion, or of civil freedom, he would have resented the profanation: and if it be against pretenders to the former that we find him most emphatic, we shall discern 'the reason in the date.' The Clergy were the direst offenders during his life: but had they been persecuted in their turn, and exposed to at least as much violence and insult as ever they exerted, there is evidence

(1) Comento, p. 43.
(2) Id. vol. II. p. 49.

enough in this poem to certify that he would have changed his style, though not sentiments; for these were strikingly an union (to repeat my former words) of entire fidelity to his own Church with much tolerance towards that of others (1). If bribery, plunder, extortion, and all the enormities of avarice and debauch were displayed by pseudo-republicans, and free discussion interdicted by pseudo-philosophers, it is them that our poet, who was truly both a philosopher and a republican, would have reprobated: for the context of all his writings justify the assertion, that it was manifestly to the beneficial or pestilential nature of men's actions that he attended, and not to see by what rank or garb the actors were distinguished military or clerical — 'whether by toga or cassock, bonnet or tonsure (2).'

P. — LVII.

Virgil, having given a negative to Dante's question whether any of those shades were to be recognised, goes on to tell him of the appearance which their bodies shall present when rising from the grave on the last day. The Avaricious shall be seen with 'clenched hand' (col pugno chiuso):

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto 11, p. 87.

(2) Sive ille Episcopus, sive sit laicus; Imperator et dominus, aut miles et servus, aut in purpura, aut in serico, aut in vilissimo panno jaceat; non honorum diversitate, sed operum merito judicabitur. Febronius, de statu Ecclesiæ, p. 778.

and this is the expression which, I already said, should be understood even of the semblances of bodies (1), the ghosts, after (perchè tieni?) 'why keep?' The prodigals shall rise to judgment with bald crowns' (co'crin mozzi): — which may refer either to the Italian 'they have shaved him' (l'hanno pelato), the proverbial mode of designating a man ruined by his excesses; or else to the medical observation that premature baldness is generally the consequence of a wild, extravagant life. This want of hair is not to be referred to the tonsures, or shaven heads, of the Romish clergy as twice before alluded to in verse XXXIX and XLVI. It is only the prodigals that are to rise with 'bald crowns;' whereas the Clergy, though accused both of avarice and prodigality, were more characteristically guilty of the former vice. Then whatever resemblance appear between the figures, this present one has nothing to do with either of the preceding (2).

Q. — LX.

'Evil spending and evil hoarding robbed them

(1) La vanità che par persona. Inf. Canto VI. v. 36.

(2) This resemblance is not much in the Italian. Neither the technical term chercuti, nor coperchio piloso al capo (which is only applicable to the *upper* part of the head and is thus synonimous with chercuti, 'tonsured') has a similar signification with crin mozzi—which last expression refers to the *entire head of hair* as being cut or torn off. But Mr. Cary's "whose heads are shorn," "that with no hairy cowls are crowned" and "those with close-shaven locks" all seem synonimes.

of the beautiful world' is the verbal exposition. Most annotators interpretet 'beautiful world', Paradise: but some (amongst whom I am one) think it signifies this beautiful, natural world (1). That both misers and prodigals render it a joyless scene with regard both to themselves and others, is most true; for those deprive themselves of pleasure, and these become callous to the sense of it. I have preferred putting this obvious interpretation on the text to that usually given (avarice and prodigality shut all these wretches out of Paradise), because Virgil need scarcely have told that to Dante, who sees them in hell; and besides, it were a repetition of what has been said so often. Indeed when it is added, that, to explain the sadness of their present plight requires 'no varnish of words' (parole non ci appulcro), since it is visible of itself, we naturally reflect that to tell us they are not in Paradise is also superfluous; since we behold them in this Tartarean hell, whose very nature is to be eternal to its occupants. But the passage, as I understand it, conveys a fine moral verity, and one not mentioned before.

R. —— LXX.

'In no production of any follower of the Muse (says M. Ginguené) 'is there a picture of Fortune superior to the one now before us, perhaps not

(1) Alcuni espongono *mondo pulcro* i beni mondani, i quali di lor natura son belli. Landino, Comento, p. 43.

even in that fine ode of Horace (O Diva gratum quæ regis Antium) than which there is nothing finer, on the same subject, in ancient poetry (1).' Instead of considering such praise over-rated, I would remove the *perhaps*. Yet we must reflect that, when Dante wrote, the current philosophy, but particularly astronomy was very different from what it is at present: so that to prevent the passage in question from seeming abstruse, it is requisite to recollect the philosophical system on which it reposes; and for that purpose we may consult Dante's own words in the Convito.

'It is almost uniformly believed that there are several heavens; and that they are directed in their motion by several intelligences, in commoner language spirits, or Angels. That on such subjects little can be positively demonstrated to human reason is true; yet that little (says the Philosopher) is calculated to impart more delight, than the investigations in which we can obtain mathematical evidence. As to the number of heavens, much have opinions varied. Aristotle, and many old astronomers, reckoned the remotest of them from us that of the fixed stars; beyond which it was held there was nothing. Ptolemy perceiving that that eighth sphere or heaven moved with more than a single motion (and being constrained by that philosophical principle, which

(1) Hist. Litt. d'Italie, vol. II. p. 68.

necessarily requires that a first mover should be the simplest imaginable power) laid it down, that there must be a celestial body beyond that of the fixed stars, in order to communicate to the Universe its primal great revolution. This is what is still taught. There are nine moveable heavens, spheres, or orbits rolling one within the other; to which this our Globe is the little centre. The nearest of them to us is that of the Moon; the second that of Mercury; the third, of Venus; the fourth, of the Sun; the fifth, Mars; the sixth, Jupiter; the seventh, Saturn; the eighth, of the fixed stars; and the ninth, that of the first Mover. The seven first are planets, that wheel in their wheeling orbits; the stars of the eighth are fixed in their orbit, and it is only it that wheels; and the ninth is that which gives all the others their primitive impulse, or great original motion from east to west; by which effect alone we are assured of its existence, since it is itself invisible to our mortal eyes. Beyond all these, we Christians suppose a tenth heaven. This tenth is the Empyrean, the source of light, immoveable itself, but the cause of the motion of the prime Mover. That prime Mover then, that crystalline, diaphanous, transparent, or ninth heaven rolls with incomprehensible swiftness withinside of this tenth heaven, this region of tranquillity, this peaceful home of an infinite Deity; who can never be entirely beheld by any other than himself alone. This is his

home, is the universal temple in which is contained the whole edifice of creation, and outside of which is nothing: this is not circumscribed to place, but is the formation of the primitive mind, or *prothoneo* of the Greeks: of this spoke the psalmist when he sang, 'the Lord hath prepared his throne in the Heavens and his kingdom ruleth over all:' this, in fine, is the Paradise of blessed saints, as decides our holy Church; and as seems indeed to have been the opinion of Aristotle himself, if his expressions be thouroughly examined (1). Now all the moving heavens, with the exception of the ninth or prime mover, having other movements besides that primitive one from east to west, and this alone being communicated to them by the prime mover, it follows that such minor movements must have their particular and efficient agents to cause them. Thus the planets, which, besides their common revolution along their orbits have other revolutions to perform round their own poles (these, however moveable with regard to external bodies, being stationary with regard to their own) must have their individual movers, or delegated, intellectual agents, who must be substances separate from matter; that is, immaterial creatures. Respecting *their* number, disputes have arisen, as well as respecting the number of the *heavens*. Some (among whom whether Aristotle

(1) Aristotele pare ciò sentire, chi bene lo intende. Convito, p. 80.

be to be classed is uncertain, since in different passages he seems contradictory) taught that those immaterial agents ought not to be held more numerous than the heavenly bodies themselves over which they preside; for that more would be useless and in a state of inaction; although it is in action that their very existence appears exclusively to consist. Such however was far from being the opinion of the sublime Plato; for, according to him, those spiritual essences are at least as numerous as the various species of created things. These, he says, (as for example, the species of mankind, species of gold, etc, etc.) must have their invisible guides, or guardians, quite as necessarily as the celestial orbs themselves: and these guardians are named by him ideas, forms, or universal natures. With a gross conception of which that mighty Sage was guiltless, the Pagans (denominating those immaterial creatures Gods and Goddesses, and forgetting that they were nothing more than subordinate agents of one great first cause) set about adoring their images as if they were real divinities: and so Vulcan became the God of fire, Minerva the Goddess of wisdom, Ceres of corn, Juno of power, etc. This we learn from the poets; who are in general very faithful expounders of the creed of Antiquity. Nearly quite similar to the theory of Plato (taking it in its primitive purity and uncorrupted by subsequent, popular misconceptions) is the doctrine of Christianity with

regard to those viewless beings; indeed such was that of the old Hebrew law too; and we change little besides mere names when we denominate them, instead of ideas or Gods and Goddesses, Angels. Since the multitude of spheres and of species may enjoy different portions of beatitude, as they are more or less removed from their Creator's abode (or the tenth heaven), so may it follow that their spiritual attendants may enjoy various ranks; and hence will arise an Angelical hierarchy corresponding to the divisions of the universe. It may be even, that those incorporeal people are more multiplied than ostensible effects indicate; and that the most refined lead a life not of direct activity, but of what is much sublimer, pure contemplation. Such speculations transcend human understanding, while our souls remain shackled in this prison of clay: yet ought that only to increase our admiration of beings, who, by reason of their noble superiority of nature, baffle all mortal conception in the detail; though, on the whole, our intellect can perceive the necessity of their existing. For a slight emanation comes from them, and, piercing the obscurity of our minds, suffices to convey to us a confused notion of their sublime perfections; in the same way as a light may be perceived by one whose eyes are shut, by means of some lucid particle, some casual ray, however feeble, which contrives to penetrate through the pores of his eyelids. Whate-

ver be the attributes imparted to that ethereal race, in this one point all men agree — philosophers, Pagans, Jews and every sect of Christianity — that they must be endowed with virtue and happiness.' Thus far Dante.

Of those aëreal substances, ideas, intelligences, deities, or angels, there is one (says Dante, culling a glorious figure for his poetry, from reasoning which I have just translated from his prose) whose duty it is to preside over the species of worldly honours, and to keep these (like the spheres themselves) in continual rotation: and this celestial regent, by men called Fortune, heedless alike of votaries and revilers, has her entire soul occupied in keeping up the revolution of the orb confided to her care by the universal Creator, and in the conscious enjoyment of her own immortal beatitude. Such, in substance, is the picture of Fortune which is about to be laid before us: and certainly it is with the utmost truth that it gained panegyrick as most grand; for, laying aside the blind-folded image of the Ancients, it presents us with another that preserves all the beauties of their Muse and remedies her oversights; by teaching her to unite most disordered chance with the most unlimited avowal of the superintendence of an omni-present Providence; and by thus reconciling (what never should have been divided) the sweetest poetry, the best of ethics, and the loftiest philosophical speculations. Had

this passage been seen by Cicero, he would not have any longer exclaimed against the unworthiness of attributing any thing divine to a being so rash and inconstant as fortune (1). A Goddess with banded eyes may be believed ignoble; but not so, this happy impassible handmaid of an infinite Jehovah. 'Nor is' (says Landino) 'the impossibility of resisting Fortune any argument against the freedom of the will: for we are at liberty to court her favours or not. They are certainly most fugitive: but if, disregarding them, we apply ourselves to the cultivation of our own minds, we gain a treasure of which no power can deprive us. This only is what can truly be called our property: for of all the things in the world the soul alone, as Plato affirms, is independent. The variety of objects that we behold are kept in continual revolution by other created substances superior to them; even the inferior spheres of heaven are influenced by the higher ones; but our soul, though exiled for a moment into this fragile body, has no other superior than the Divinity himself of whom it is a particle. But if we choose to woo the gifts of Fortune, let us be prepared for the instability that is unavoidable: so, may a traveller choose whether to undertake his journey by land or by water; but if he determines on the latter, it behooves him to steel his heart against the fluctua-

(1) Quam nemo ab inconstantia et temeritate sejunget: quæ digna certe non sunt Deo. Nat. Deor. l. 3. p. xxiv.

ting nature of the elements (1).' This metaphorical reasoning Landino borrowed from Boëtius (2). I know, a rhymester of the age of Dante cavilled against this portrait of Fortune; as if the making her *necessarily* roll round her orb were an interference with the free will of man and the omnipotence of the Divinity. But I believe few philosophical minds but will allow, that it affords on the contrary the most conciliatory theory ever invented to reconcile opinions on the most difficult point which ever employed the human understanding.

The wisdom beyond wisdom beaming,
Who made the heavens, made each a guide
To minister the radiant streaming
And circles of creation wide;
And also placed a Queen o'er chance
Of mundane splendors with their tide
Of phantasms . . . . . .
Matter no whit your plots on plot;
She orders, sees, foresees the whole.
Guardian and Goddess of her lot,
Her orb that never finds a goal
She keeps — and must — still fleetly tost;
While human fates as fleetly roll.
Yea! this is she whom slanders long have crost:
Pure, holy Fair so crucified!
And most by those who owe her most.

(1) Landino, Comento, p. 45.

(2) Si ventis vela commiteres, non quo voluntas peteret, sed quo flatus impelleret, permovereris. De Consol. Lib. II. Cap. I.

But such she hears not: —— wheeling wide
Her sphere the primal race divine among;
Conscious, like them, of bliss and nought beside.

S. —— LXXXIV.

Latet anguis in herbâ (1). '*Gods*' applied to Fortune and similar 'intelligences' (come gli altri Dei) was, in all likelihood, introduced by Dante as a repetition of what he observed in the passage which I just cited from the Convito, that the Gods and Goddesses of Paganism, however ignorantly adored by the vulgar, were not truly honored by the best of the Ancients otherwise than as *secondary* causes; and were indeed little more to them, than what Angels are to the Moderns. They were then, as they now are, instruments working the will of a single omnipotent Being, whether named Fate, or Destiny, Jove, or Jehovah. We must not be astonished at Dante's letting slip no occasion of apology for the Greeks and Romans; for it was his favourite theme to mingle fondest respect for Antiquity with a most enthusiastic attachment to Christianity. The former of these feelings rendered him very quick in apprehending any thing to the honor of Paganism, and perhaps somewhat blind to its defects: the latter, by being tempered with the other, produced that fervent but tolerating piety which I premised we should find to be

(1) Virgil. Ecl. III. v. 93.

one of his distinguishing features; and which might have enslaved his reason to his imagination, had he not been a man of the world habitually conversant with business. As it was, it formed a rare compound of philosophy, theology, poetry and politics; in each of which departments he may have some rivals, but scarcely one superior.

T. —— XCIV.

Sua sapientia et virtute gaudet, says Cicero speaking of the life of the Deity (1): but it is of Boëtius that the entire of this beautiful passage breathes much; whose volume we should recognise as one of Dante's habitual companions, even if he had not told us it. 'Riches, honors, and all such' (Boetius exclaims in the person of Fortune) 'are within my jurisdiction, and, like slaves, they know their Mistress (2).' How inferior to the verses of Dante, are rendered even these noble ones of Horace, by the mere epithets of reproval which they contain; reproval so severely stigmatized by the other, as the sacrilegious vociferation of men, who forget how much they are beholden to the Angel they insult.

Fortuna sævo læta negotio, et
Ludum insolentem ludere pertinax,

(1) Nat. Deor. lib. I. p. XIX.
(2) Dominam famulæ cognoscunt. Consol. Phil. Lib. II. cap. 2.

Transmutat incertos honores
Nunc mihi, nunc aliis benigna (1)!

This passage of the Divine Comedy appears manifestly to have been paraphrased by Guido Cavalcanti; and I remark it, because it furnishes an additional corroboration of Boccaccio's statement, that Dante had composed the seven first Cantos of this poem before his exile from Florence. Guido died ere then; but that he shonld have perused the Cantos, however secret they were kept from all other eyes, was natural. He was more of a philosopher than of a poet; so he gives rather the morality, than the sweet fancy of his friend (2).

U. —— XCIX.

The 'night is dropping' of Virgil is here imitated, in order to mark the hour. Night is said to begin to drop, when it is past mid-night; forming what Macrobius tells us, under the name of mediæ noctis inclinatio, was the first of the twelve parts into which the Romans divided their civil day. Dante therefore does nothing more than simplify the Virgilian phrase, and, instead of *night*, put the *stars themselves* —— 'every star begins to drop:' and this has the advantage of keeping the reader in mind of the time more effectually, by making

(1) Carm. l. 3. Od. 23.
(2) Il moto, il corso, e l'opra di Fortuna
E quanto in lei s'aduna
Moto riceve dal primo Motore, ec.
Rime p. 52—60.

him recollect that those same stars were climbing up the nocturnal arch when Hell was entered. We have been in it then full six hours; or it is now about one o'clock in the morning of the ninth of April, 1300 (1). It follows, that it is not another verse of Virgil's (suadentque cadentia sidera somnos) that is refered to; for this were to indicate a much later hour, or what Macrobius calls conticinium (2). Nor are we to suppose that Virgil points upward while he uses the words, or in any way imagine changes of day and night to be in hell (which misconstruction were to introduce the same confusion into this poem, that some of the commentators do into the Aeneid): but he avers that the stars are declining, precisely because (though he is gifted with internal consciousness of it himself) he knows they are invisible to his pupil: for we shall be told in positive terms hereafter, that our travellers see them again only on emerging back to our world (3).

W. —— CIII.

Crossing over towards the interior edge of this fourth Circle (in which it was useless to tar-

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 67.

(2) Primum tempus diei dicitur mediæ noctis inclinatio; deinde gallicinium; inde conticinium, cum et galli conticescunt et *homines etiam tum quiescunt;* deinde diliculum, id est, cum incipit dignosci dies, etc. Saturnalia, Lib. 1. cap. 3.

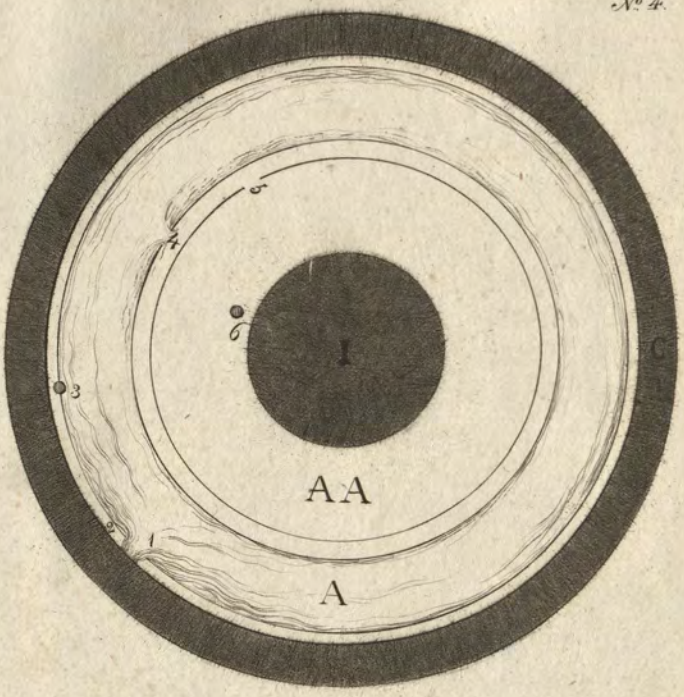
(3) Uscimmo a riveder le stelle. Inf. Canto XXXIV. v. 139.

ry longer, since its inhabitants were none of them recognised) they find a hole with a gush of nauseous waters: these being apparently that gloomy Acheron which we saw encompassing the first Circle, and which (from its never having been noticed since) we may suppose had performed a subterranean course as far as this point; where it seems to have eaten away a hole, that renders its conduit a little visible. Its 'flood of sorrow' then tumbles along; till, spouting out below, it forms the fifth Circle or Stygian lake. Into this fifth Circle Virgil and Dante descend, and find the Stygian lake to be the place of punishment for the crime of anger: and with the more propriety is this classic name given, because the Ancients believed Styx to be symbolical of the very same vice (1).

As to the dimensions of this fifth Circle, they are similar to the preceding ones, viz: it is 14 miles deep and (in its net diameter) 17 ½ wide. But its form is different. Immediately under the wall runs a narrow path, forming an exterior border to the lake: and the interior circumference instead of being, as heretofore, the brink of a pit, presents us with a circular fortification inclosing that horrid town which is to form the sixth Circle—both the fifth and sixth Circle being on a level. This

(1) Stygem quicquid inter se humanos animos in gurgite mergit odiorum. Macrob. in Som. Scip. lib. 1. cap. 10.

№ 4.



Bird's-eye view of the Fifth and Sixth Circles.

A. Fifth Circle, or Stygian Lake.

AA. Sixth Circle, Dis, or City of Sepulchres.

C. Upper Circles.

I. Lower Circles.

1. Torrent.
2. Path.
3. Signal-tower.
4. Ditch and bastion.
5. Gate.
6. Signal-tower.

may require a little drawing, to be quite clear. "Make no friendship with an angry man," (thus says the holy proverb) "and with a furious man thou shalt not go (1)." Here are manifestly two kinds of wrathful men; the first of whom we are told not to select for a friend, but with the second are absolutely prohibited from having any communication whatever: and I believe such was precisely the authority which induced Dante to make the distinction, which we find he does, of choler into two kinds. One of these (ungovernable, impetuous anger) is tormented on the surface of Styx; and it is surely a wretched infirmity: —— "make no friendship with an angry man."

X. —— CXX.

The obvious signification of Virgil's words is: 'it is anger that is punished in this lake; those whom you see on the surface, were men who allowed themselves to be habitually overpowered by transports of violence; and the bubbles that you see rising (or rather *bourgeoning* (2)) all along the water, are the hard breathings of crowds who are there deeply immersed for having been con-

(1) Proverbs, XXII, 24.

(2) The word is *pullulare*, and is a figurative expression drawn from the bourgeoning of plants. È propriamente lo spuntar de' germogli dalle piante. Felice metafora! che esprime un simil cangiamento sulla superficie dell' acqua per l'eruzione dell'aria, ec. Poggiali, Ed. Livorn. vol. 3. p. 101. Mr. Cary attends not to the metaphor.

taminated with a still worse description of the same iniquity —— pent up anger, or hate.' This is of a piece with what we shall see in the 'river of blood' of a future Canto; where the sufferers are plunged more or less deeply according to their gradations in the same crime, tyranny (1). The ira of the Latins was divided into ira, and lenta ira. It is the first is on the surface of Styx. Greek, with characteristic abundance, has several words to express each of these two angers. Ὀργὴ (ira vehementior) has a peculiar application to the flounderers on the top of the pool; for it is derived from ὀρέγομαι (porrectis manibus vel pedibus capto) 'to struggle with hands or legs widely extended (2).'

V. —— CXXIII.

I am quite of Daniello's opinion, that it is the second and worse description of anger that is below the surface sticking in the hellish mud (3). We call it hate. "With a furious man thou shalt not go." 'It is an implacability of nature with which' (thus Boccaccio) 'the Tuscans are cursed above all other Italians, and the Florentines above all other Tuscans. The Florentines never pardon (4).' Yet Dante's manner of rendering his idea is

(1) Inferno, Canto XII. v. 124.
(2) Lexicon Ernest.
(3) Comento, p. 54.
(4) Comento, vol. II. p. 66.

somewhat defective in clearness; for (accidioso fummo) 'lazy smoke' induces many to contend that it is no description of anger, but merely *sloth* that is stifling in the bottom of Styx. But why make sloth more criminal than anger? Dante does quite the contrary in Purgatory: nor would he have subverted there, the ethical scale which he had adopted here. Besides, the slothful are evidently included among the despicable crew 'who ne'er were living yet' (che mai non fur vivi (1)) and whom we saw in the Vestibule. The epithet 'sorrowful' (tristi) applied to haters, has a twofold propriety; from hate being always melancholy, and from 'sorrowful' (tristo) and 'wicked' (scellerato) being most commonly employed as synonimes in Italian. The '*lazy* smoke of hate' comes near the Latin ira *lenta*, and still near the μῆνις (ira *permanens*) of the Greeks. But the situation in which these haters are, being *buried* in the mud, is so naturally suggested by another Greek name for deep hate, κότος (ira vetus), that I can scarcely forbear affirming that Dante had it in his mind. Κότος is a derivative of κεῖμαι (jaceo, vel sepultus sum) '*to lie buried* (2).' It were to make our Author more habitually familiar with Greek than I ever intended (3): yet the coincidence of the wrathful striking about their members (non

(1) Inferno, Canto III. v. 64.
(2) Lexicon Ernest.
(3) Hell, Comment, Canto III. p. 200.

pur con mano, ma con la testa, piedi, ec.) with the original signification of ὀργὴ, and of that of haters with the radical meaning of κότος, makes me doubt, whether it would not be far more difficult to believe in such circumstances being casual, than to allow Dante was a little more versed in Greek, than was at first imagined.

Z. —— CXXX.

I said there was a path close under the wall and bordering the lake (1). It is along that path they now go.

(1) Pag. 450.

COMMENT

HELL

CANTO THE EIGHTH.

A. —— 1.

Having in last Canto entered the fifth circle, I then noticed both the nature of its denizens and its form and dimensions. We left our travellers winding along the narrow path that skirts the baleful lake, and at length coming in sight of a tower situated on that same path. They still walk along the water's brim, and reach the tower whose summit long attracted their attention from its two small flames that incessantly kept up a telegraphic correspondence with another beacon-light far away over Styx. The meaning of these signals is soon revealed by the arrival of a boat; for this shows, that they served to inform the inhabitants of the lower circles of the approach of an additional lodger, for whom the infernal pinnace was to be dispatched. Under this error, the 'rugged mariner' rows quickly up; and is obliged to embark Virgil and Dante and convey them to the City in the centre of the lake —— in crossing which they have an adventure with one of its wild swimmers.

At the gate of the town they land, but are denied admittance by its demoniac guard; and the Canto closes with the appearance of a glorious creature coming down from the better regions of hell to their assistance.

We are come to the proper place for proving, what I more than once premised, that the first Cantos of this poem were written before their Author's exile from Florence. Let me observe however, the line before us does not in itself convey any internal evidence in favour of what I advance, any more than this passage often quoted from Villani does against it: —— 'Dante while in exile wrote many songs, letters, and the Comedy (1).' What does this imply (if taken with the fair latitude to be conceded to the composer, not of a biographical memoir, but of an universal history) but simply, that Dante wrote the chief part of the Divine Comedy during his exile? —— a position that is undeniable. His reputation, not only in science and politics, but in poetry, was fully established long previous to his exile; if he had never written a word of his COMEDY, he would still have been the founder of Italian poetry. He showed he was conscious of this from the very opening of this poem, by asserting that his beautiful Virgilian style had already secured his fame:

(1) Gio. Villani, Ist. Lib. IX. cap. 135.

O Author! who did'st form my style
To beauty, that *hath won* me fame (1).

What is really astonishing, and argues Athenian superiority of intellect in the Florentines of that day, is that his intense poetry was popular — not in the English, but the extensive, Tuscan sense of that word: for his verses were more commonly sung by the lowest of the people then, than ever those of Tasso have since been (2). It

(1) Tu se' solo colui da cu' io tolsi
Lo bello stile che *m' ha fatto* onore.
Inferno, Canto, 1. v. 86.

(2) Proofs are extant: as a story about a black-smith chaunting some of Dante's verses in his smithy; and another of an ass-driver beguiling labour in a similar way while driving a parcel of asses near one of the gates in Florence. The ass-driver was exerting his lungs still more injuriously for the melody of the poet, than a carpenter whom I heard every night during an entire summer vociferating the *Gerusalemme* along the banks of the Arno — the seventh Canto of it, I mean; for this is the favourite one with the Pisans, and, only the other day, a *Vetturino* driving me from Pisa to Leghorn performed from the first verse (Intanto Erminia infra, etc.) even to the very last (orribile armonia, etc.) without once stopping during the journey. Nor were the performer's closing notes ill adapted to his performance. The man who transmits the stories (Franco Sacchetti) was a contemporary of Petrarch and Boccaccio and almost, if not entirely, of Dante: for the precise year of Sachetti's birth is not ascertained. He was also one of the most distinguished noblemen of Florence; so that his authority is every way conclusive. Pelli represents him as saying the ass-driver was singing 'some verses of the Comedy' (un pezzo della sua Commedia. Mem. ec. p. 132); but this is one of Pelli's inaccuracies. Sacchetti says no such thing — for he only mentions 'the book of Dante,' without noticing which of his books it was. It could not have been the COMEDY: for though some Cantos of it were written, they were not published, nor even shown to Dante's intimate friends. His *first* friend, Cavalcanti, probably knew of them, but no one else — not even Ser Dino Perrini, who, Boccaccio writes, was quanto più si potesse familiare ed amico di Dante. Comento. vol. 2. p. 69. The

may interest a few, curious, literary antiquaries to learn as much as can be discovered on a subject of which so little is ever discoverable — the birth and growth of one of the standard poems of the world. It is most true, that there is nothing in the verse we are commenting, that any more proveth our Author interrupted his work for several years, and then took it up in this place, than many similar phrases in Ariosto argue he left off and continued his poem at intervals; which were in contradiction with fact (1). Had we no other testimonies than that line of Villani, and this verse of Dante himself, we might expunge them as opposite qualities, rather ciphers, and fairly confess we know nothing of the matter. Nor is it less unreasonable to argue from the *Ghibellinism* in the first seven Cantos, that they were written after their author became a *Ghibelline* — after his exile. They savour neither of Ghibellinism, nor Guelphism; for on the only occasion wherein those factions are mentioned, the leaders of both

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book then must have been some of Dante's songs — either his Rime, or his Vita Nuova. My carpenter, however inharmonious in the music of his *recitativo*, made at least no breaches in it: but the ass-driver broke the metre every now and then with Ar-ri! addressed to his asses. So Dante happening to pass by, and having his meditations chased and his ears wounded by that dissonance, discharged his cane suddenly upon the poor ass-driver's shoulders, crying out to him 'fellow, I never wrote that Ar-ri!' Franco Sachetti, Nov. 114—115. Ammirato, Ist. Lib. XIV.—Negri, Ist. Scritt. Fior.

(1) As for example:

Tornando al lavoro che vario ordisco.

Orlando Fur. Canto XVI. St. 5.

are emphatically condemned (1). Truth is, Dante was no more a Guelph before exile, than a Ghibelline after it: for his resistance to the French and Papal dominations, and scheme of according the Emperor an unarmed presidency, in order to unite the various Italian states in one great federal Republic, no more shows him a Ghibelline; than his fighting against the furious Ghibelline faction at Campaldine, and his entering Florence amongst the *white* Guelphs, shows him a Guelph. It is not easy to perceive, why the investigation of where and when these Cantos were composed should ever have become aggrandized, from its natural insignificance, into a question of party. Yet so it is: the Florentines sustain that these portions of the Divine Comedy date previous to their Author's exile from home; the Veronese deny it. Neither of those people should be desirous of aggravating the ingratitude of their ancestors, but rather of palliating it; and considering their ill-treatment of Dante, their shame is enhanced the more proofs are accumulated of his having sought to do them honor. The weight of obligation under which Florence labours in his regard were vast enough; without super-adding epic poetry: and that he had served her faithfully during years both with sword and pen; fighting her great battle in Campaldine, regulating her diplomacy in a

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto VII. p. 378.

variety of ways, and bequeathing her an immortal language, both prose and verse, in his Vita Nuova, merited a far different requital than he received. How much he exerted himself in both her home and foreign affairs may be gathered, not only from his having been so often ambassador and once a Prior of the Republic, but from the story circulated by his enemies, and which may very well be true without doing him any discredit; for none can result from his being so immersed in meditation on his public duties, as to fall into absence. A vain desire of dividing himself into two, in order to serve his country more effectually, was the enthusiasm of patriotism, not arrogance (1). Dante was a Florentine by birth, education, and predilection; was long its most distinguished minister; was in his thirty-seventh year when forced from it by political misfortunes; ere which, he had already published enough to prove him the most learned character of his age. Nothing subsequent can make him more or less a Tuscan; and whether he composed a few Cantos during his rambles, or ere he left home, neither detracts from nor adds to the just pride of his countrymen. He adopted not any other land: nor even ever fixed his abode in another for any considerable period. To excuse the iniquitous return made by their ancestors to such devotedness; to show there was at least some

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto vi. p. 357—Note.

reasonable pretext for expelling their excellent citizen with contumely; for disregarding his letters (one of which opens so affectingly, 'O my people! what have I done to thee? (1)'); for decreeing his exile should be perpetual, unless he bought his recall with his dishonor; for confiscating his property; and for sentencing him to be burnt alive without further trial, if taken — to endeavour to disprove, or soften down these opprobrious misdeeds would be more creditable to Florentines, than to contend that a few Cantos of this poem were composed within their walls. It would even be more to the purpose, did they erect at this day some tardy monument to the memory of the most famous personage their City ever produced. But Florence, is and always was characteristically ungrateful to its heroes; and has not yet attempted to propitiate the insulted manes of any one of its illustrious triumvirs, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio. Their bones repose at a distance from their native town; where the traveller is amazed at not finding the slightest sepulchral memorial to recall their names:

> And Santa Croce wants their mighty dust;
> Yet for this want more noted, as of yore
> The Cæsar's pageant, shorn of Brutus' bust,
> Did but of Rome's best son remind her more (2).

(1) Populo mi! quid feci tibi? Manetti, Vita Dantis.
(2) Childe Harold, Canto IV. st. 59.

The Veronese, (though in a much slighter degree) are in a predicament of a similar kind: and it better becomes them to explain away the insults which Dante suffered in their town, than to blazon their own ancestors' ingratitude by representing the visit with which he honored them as long, or the verses which he composed during it as numerous. That at the board of a tyrant whom they misname *great*, such scurrility should have been directed against the greatest man of that age, is what requireth explanation; and to show that this was not so grossly the case as is usually recorded, is what would really exculpate both Verona and the family of La Scala. The ingenuity of the Marchese Maffei would have been patriotically employed, had it sought, either to liberate Verona at the expense of its boy-despot, by showing that not being a free republic, like Florence, it were not fair to hold the people responsible for his inurbanity; or to controvert the authority of Petrarch (1), and make us disbelieve the tales of the servants at Court receiving orders to gather the bones round the table and fling them under Dante's chair, and of Can's having asked Dante publicly on another occasion, how it came to pass that he was less admired by every one than the court jester or fool (2). Or if

(1) Rer. Mem. l. 4.

(2) To such ribaldry the Poet certainly replied in the sarcastic tone it merited — that if his appetite was greedy in leaving much bones, theirs was greedier in leaving none; and that as to predilection for a

those unworthy tales be too substantiated for controversy, and that Maffei still preferred to be the apologist of that sovereign, it would have been a more effectual plea to have reminded us of his youth, and of how pardonable are levities in the spring of life, when it is exposed to intrigues of flatterers and heart-hardening power; and to have assured the readers (instead of leading them astray by a conscious subversion of chronology) that when Can extolled his buffoon over the aimable gravity of an all-accomplished guest, it was less from congeniality of disposition than festive distraction; that if his coarse jests necessitated the departure of the distinguished stranger, he lost no time in expressing compunction and soliciting his return; and that if in a moment of forgetfulness he spurned an 'Angel visit,' lasting regret almost compensated for the gross error. Throwing aside the many considerations, that are either irrelative, or ill-timed, or both; adding, that wherever the Cantos were written, they could not have been written in Verona, for that their Author did not go there till 1308, and that he had finished the

buffoon, it was natural for people to like those best whom they resembled most. Yet though Dante was not deficient in the wit of a man of the world, it must have cut him to have been obliged to make such use of it; and the conscious dignity of genius suffering alike by the insult and the repartee, he was soon engaged to leave Verona for ever — as soon as Can attained the full sovereignty. Hell, Comment, Canto I. p. 48.

whole Canticle of Hell before that time (1): I say, rejecting every vain conjecture and coming to plain matter of evidence, we first discern, from comparing dates, that these seven first Cantos, of thirty that were published at latest in 1308, must have been written before the summer of 1307; and then comes the absolute affirmation of half a dozen incontestible witnesses, all of them the contemporaries, and one of them the nephew of Dante, that they were committed to paper previous to his exile. It is the most authentic information we have concerning the composition of any part of the Divine Comedy, (and is indeed curious from being more authentic, than almost any thing else we know about any epic poem whatever) and it leads to the precise dates of Dante's movements during the first five years of his exile. If we add them to those after his coming to Verona (1308 (2)), we have a chronological series surprisingly entire

(1) They who pretend otherwise make many breaches in chronology. I have quoted from the legal documents themselves that his exile was in 1302 (Hell, Comment, Canto VI. p. 363): and he was then in his thirty-seventh year (Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 133). Yet Bettinelli writes 'Dante's exile happened in 1300' (il suo esilio avvenuto al 1300. Risorgimento, Cap. 5); and Maffei, that 'it happened in 1301 when he was thirty-five years of age'— dopo che fu in esilio il quale seguì nel 1301, quando era in età di 35 anni. Verona Illus. It is hard to give much credit to writers, who, on the very points they profess to elucidate, make such mistakes — mistakes, which however trivial in themselves, become of consequence as proofs of inaccuracy: for to have looked into Villani, Macchiavelli, or any of the principal Italian historians would have prevented them.

(2) Hell, Comment, Canto I. p. 48.

from the period of his banishment from Florence up to the day of his death; and which might enable a biographer to narrate at least that portion of his life with much exactness of detail. No reasonable doubt can attach to the literary anecdote I am about to relate; for, at the same time that it contradicts nothing told in any of the elder comments, it is itself most circumstantially given by two of the oldest of them, Boccaccio and the Riccardi M. S. —— which only vary enough to corroborate each other, by showing (an observation already made by me in speaking of Francesca da Rimini) that they were not derived from identical sources, though their account is identical (1).

Dante was Florentine Ambassador in Rome when the first sentence of banishment was pronounced against him in January, 1302; and immediately upon learning it, he departed from a city, where it is likely he could not have staid with any safety (since Boniface VIII. was yet alive) and retiring to Sienna and thence to Arezzo, was named by the Chiefs of the *white* Guelphs (as soon as they were exiled, about three months after he had been so himself) one of the twelve counsellors entrusted with the supreme authority; and in this quality he accompanied them in that unsuccessful attempt to re-instate themselves at home in 1304, which, I said formerly, was patronised by the new Pontiff

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto v. p. 300.

Benedict XI; and which terminated so unfortunately, not only for the *White Chiefs* themselves, but for the *whole of the White party* (1). After that overthrow, our Poet wandered into the north of Italy, and took up his residence for at least a short time in Padua; for there is extant a legal instrument belonging to the Papafava family (2), which bears Dante's signature, as one of the witnesses. The asking of him to witness it was probably intended as a compliment to an illustrious stranger; and his signature, besides its usual mode of designating his family and country, informs us that he was regularly domiciliated there, and even tells in what street his house stood (3). Returning into Tuscany we find him signing a treaty in Mugello in 1307, without specification of month or day (4); but probably in January. From Mugello (where the *Whites* made a last feeble struggle) he went early in the same year, to the Marquis Malaspina's near Sarzana. Thus full five years had elapsed since his exile, when he found himself with Malaspina. Although this be an instance in which Boc-

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto VI. p. 367.

(2) The Marchese Papafava is still the most considerable nobleman of Padua.

(3) Millesimo trecentesimo sexto.... die vigesimo septimo mensis Augusti, Padue in contrata S. Martini in domo..... Domo Papafave; presentibus Dantino Alligerii de Florentia qui nunc stat Padue in contrata S. Laurentii, etc. Pelli, Mem. ec. p. 96.

(4) In Dei nomine Amen 1307. Actum in Choro Ab. S. Gaudentii, presentibus, etc. Dom. Torrigianus, Dante Alleghierii, etc. etc. Pelli, Mem. p. 98.

caccio seems to be at variance with what I now state (as well as with the M. S. — for it also describes Dante as moving about much during this interval) yet is it only in *seeming;* for he comes to the same conclusion and indeed corroborates my statement, when, leaping over those five years entirely, he writes: 'it was about five years after his exile, that Dante, being on a visit to the Marchese M. Malaspina, an estimable nobleman of Lunigiana, recovered those Cantos of the Divine Comedy which had been written by him in Florence (1).' For the violence of the *Blacks* against the exiled *Whites* being a little calmed about this time, and popular excesses consequently repressed, the sufferers began to be permitted to turn themselves towards legal interference and seek for some reparation for their losses (2): on which Dante's wife (who was a Donati, and had with her children obtained refuge in her brother's house, when obliged to fly from her own) was advised to put in her claim likewise, and to require that at least her dowry should be paid out of her condemned husband's property — which seems to

(1) This family, (no longer independent princes) even yet hold their Marquisate; but under Genova. I am intimate with the present Marquis. His habitation, though ancient, is not the ancient feudal castle, but stands a little below it. Even that old *rocca* however still exists in a dilapidated state; and *the chamber of Dante* is shown to visitors.

(2) Riposato lo stato di Firenze e cessate le ruberie, fu conceduto ad assai Cittadini, ancorchè fossino di fuori, di poter ridimandare il loro chè era stato occupato. Bib. Ricc. M. S. Cod. 1016.

have been still in the forcible possession of some potent individuals, rather than irrevocably confiscated to the State (1). To make this petition with any hopes of success, it was necessary to corroborate her brother's authority (who was a chieftain of the triumphant faction) with that of her own marriage articles. These, along with all the writings of her husband, she had thrown into a box; with which she escaped at the moment the mob were advancing: and papers seem to have been the only matter of property which she had time to save from that relentless rabble, who soon reduced Dante's house to a few bare walls. There is no ground for believing her to have been a literary lady, nor were writings in those days of any mercantile value; it was then a natural and affecting example of conjugal tenderness in her, to select, in that moment of trepidation and danger, not any of the effects which were of more intrinsic worth in vulgar eyes (and probably even in her

(1) Passati ben 5 anni o più, dopo che le case di quei condannati furono rubate, e che i possenti n'occuparono chi una possessione, e chi un'altra, e similmente quelle di Dante, la città essendo venuta a più convenevole reggimento, le persone cominciarono a domandare loro ragione, chi con un titolo, e chi con un'altro (Boccaccio, Comento, Vol. 2. p. 67). Onde fu consigliata la donna di Dante, che ella almeno colle ragioni della dote sua dovesse dei di lui beni raddomandare: onde essa, che fu sirocchia del baccellieri de' Donati, e al tempo della cacciata di Dante avea portato uno suo forziere a casa del fratello, per volere ridimandare certi beni ch'erano occupati da un grande huomo di Firenze, andò a questo forziere e menò seco Ser Dino Perrini uno grande amico di Dante; e cercando di sue carte, trovò i sette Capitoli scritti tutti dalla mano di Dante stesso. Bib. Ricc. M. S. ut supra.

own), but the loose papers of her husband; which she felt would be the most acceptable present to make him, in case he and she should ever meet again (1). Meet again they never did, nor could. The one past the remainder of his life in forlorn poverty in foreign lands, daily hoping to be recalled to Florence and daily finding his hopes deferred: and the other remained under her brother's roof, bringing up her six children as well as she could (yet poorly and with difficulty) on the little she could scrape up from her husband's ruin; and probably indulging the false hopes of his return, that he did himself. Had she left Florence, their offspring would have been reduced to the same total penury as their father; who (allowed no remittances from home) went wandering over the world, sometimes a transient guest, but generally the occasional diplomatic agent of one or other of the little Italian States (2). When the marriage articles were inquired after, she thought of the box of papers, which in scrupulous fidelity she is said to have kept unopened up to that hour; and sus-

(1) Boccaccio indeed uses the plural: but the Ricc. M. S. says emphatically that it was *one* box she saved — *uno forziere*.

(2) Era alcuna particella delle sue possessioni dalla Donna col titolo della sua dote dalla cittadina rabbia stata con fatica difesa: de' frutti della quale essa sè e i piccioli figliuoli di lui, *assai sottilmente* reggeva; per la qual cosa, povero, con industria disusata gli convenia il sostentamento di se medesimo procacciare. Oh! quanti onesti sdegni gli convenne posporre, più duri a lui che la morte... colla speranza della prossima ritornata, ec. Boccaccio, Vita di Dante, p. 234.

pecting the articles might be among those papers, she went with Ser Dino Perrini (a great friend of Dante's) to examine them, according to some; but, according to others, she acted with still more propriety, for she sent for Dante's eldest nephew, Andrea, and (in that quality) confided to him the key in company with an Attorney (1). From the mouth of this very nephew, (a son of Dante's sister married to a Florentine gentleman of the name of Poggi) Boccaccio affirms he had the anecdote, as well as some time afterwards from Perrini: and although Andrea and Perrini dissented in this, that each ascribed the chief merit to himself; yet as to the substance of their story, they did not vary. The former said that as soon as he opened the box, he beheld a small unbound volume (un quadernetto) all in Dante's hand, and containing the first seven Cantos of the Divine Comedy; which (after having perused them several times with infinite pleasure) he brought to the Poet, Frescobaldi. Perrini declared it was he himself did so (2). They

(1) *Siccome nipote di Dante* fidatogli le chiavi lo mandò con un procuratore. Boccaccio, Comento, ut supra.

(2) Andrea dice che tra più sonetti, canzoni e simili cose, fu un quadernetto, nel quale di mano di Dante erano scritti i sette Canti; e però presolo quantunque poco ne 'ntendesse, pur gli parevano bellissime cose: e gli portò, per saper quello che fossero, ad un valente huomo della nostra città, famosissimo dicitore in rima, Dino di Messer Lambertuccio Frescobaldi, il quale pensò da dovere, mandargli a Dante, ec. Ora questa medesima istoria puntualmente mi raccontò Ser Dino Perrini; ma in tanto muta il fatto, che dice essere stato lui (e non Andrea) che trovò i Canti, ec. Id. Id.

are reconciled, if we conclude that they were both together: and that the one, who was sent merely as a near relative, knew the hand-writing, but not the beauty of the poetry; for he is represented as a simple, good kind of man, without any tincture of letters, although in form and exterior lineaments he much resembled his Uncle (1); while Perrini held himself entitled to be considered the discoverer, on the score of its being he that discerned the high merit of those Cantos, and of his consequently having chosen them from a quantity of songs, sonnets, and other morsels of verse (2). Frescobaldi was still more struck on their perusal; and taking measures to learn where Dante then was (a proof that he had not been long resident any where, since even his family were unacquaint-

(1) Huomo idiota ma d'assai buon sentimento naturale e nei suoi ragionamenti e costumi ordinato e laudevole: e maravigliosamente nelle lineature del viso somigliò Dante, ed ancora nella statura della persona. Boccaccio, Comento, ut supra.

(2) *Intendente*, e quanto esser più si potesse familiare ed amico di Dante. Id Id. — Perrini tolti questi capitoli gli portò a M. Dino Lambertuccio Frescobaldi, che fu valente huomo, massimamente nel dir in rima. Onde Dino invaghito dell'opera mandò il quadernetto copiato a M. M. Malaspina, confortandolo che rammentasse a Dante che egli il compiesse. Bib. Ricc. M. S. ut supra. The Imolese gives the first name of this Fresobaldi (Dino), on which Muratori makes the mistake of calling him Dino Compagni (Antiq. Ital. vol. 1. p. 1041). Pelli is right in pointing it out as an error (Mem. ec. p. 132): and he might have added, that there were two Dinos in the story; so that Muratori had the less excuse for thinking the name enough to identify the historian Dino Compagni. Dino was then a very common name in Florence; and a loose proof. We see the Ricc. M. S. agrees with Boccaccio that it was D. L. Frescobaldi — a man of whom there are some M. S. S. in the Vatican. Giulio Negri, Scritt. Fior.

ed with his movements), and finding he was in Lunigiana at the Marquis Malaspina's (1), he wrote a letter to the Marquis himself; inclosing the seven Cantos which he intreated that eminent nobleman to present to his mighty guest, and to use all his interest with him that a work should be continued whose splendid exordium promised something of such super-human glory; although none but the Author could foresee what. Frescobaldi's preferring to address the feudal prince, rather than the poet, is to be accounted for, either from a consciousness of the bad grace which the request of a Florentine deserved to have in Dante's eyes, or from a belief that it would really require the warmest intercession and actual presence of an illustrious friend, (as Malaspina proved himself to Dante) to engage a man, who had begun a poem in youth and prosperity, to take it up again after a long lapse of time, when he was fallen into grief and mendicity, exasperated by numberless wrongs and insults, himself driven from his home and family, and these in dependance on his bitterest enemies, and when he was persecuted, in fine, by all the accumulated cares public and private that can conspire to poison the fountains of poetry — to fester the heart and deaden the imagination. In this latter opinion Frescobaldi would have been partly

(1) Ed avendo investigato, e trovato che Dante era in Lunigiana col Marchese M. de'Malaspini, pensò di non mandargli a Dante, ma al Marchese. Boccaccio, Comento, ut supra.

right, for it is said to have been with much difficulty that the Marquis could induce Dante to resume his poetical occupation; although he saw his long-lost Cantos with melancholy pleasure; adding, 'that he verily thought they had been stolen as well as all the rest of his writings and effects, when his house was put to sack, and that so he had quite relinquished every concern about them (1).' At last the spark was struck: and, with a flush of prophetic enthusiasm, the bard exclaimed — 'Yes they have restored me my long-meditated work; and it shall be to my imperishable honor (2). It was not without considerable effort that he succeded in recalling the train of his ideas and kindling up anew the lofty fancy which had been so many years smothered; — and then the 'Faithful, I follow in my song' (Io dico seguitando) of the text came in quite naturally, and the more so from no other similar formulary occurring any where else throughout the poem:

(1) Veggendo il quaderno Dante se ne maravigliò, ch'era bene 5 anni che lasciato l'aveva; ma essendone confortato forte dal Marchese, ripigliò i Canti, ec. (Bib. Ricc. M. S. ut supra)... Dante rispose, Io estimava veramente che questi, con altre mie cose e scritture assai, fossero, nel tempo che rubata mi fu la casa, perduti, e però del tutto n'avea l'animo e il pensiero levato; ma poichè a Dio è piaciuto, che perduti non sieno, e hammegli rimandati innanzi, io adopererò ciò, ec. Boccaccio, Comento, ut supra..

(2) Redditus est mihi maximus labor cum honore perpetuo. Benvenuti Im. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. Vol. 1. p. 1042. The expression *maximus*, when coupled with the annunciation in the Vita Nuova (Hell, Comment, Canto 11. p. 114), is surely enough to make us decide that the Divine Comedy was begun at least prior to the publication of

although such words taken by themselves alone, would not (as I have avowed) prove any thing(1). Frescobaldi, ere forwarding the Cantos to Lunigiana, kept a copy of them; in which copy the lines about Ciacco (in Canto VI.), as well as probably various others, were —— must have been wanting. Boccaccio wonders he never saw any such defective copy. But in the first place, he does not say he ever asked his authorities, Andrea and Perrini, to show it to him; and indeed seems to have amused himself in his old age with recounting facts as he received them, and allowing full scope to his own reveries, without taking the pains of nicely sifting even matters far less insignificant than this. With regard to this he did enough, in a comment composed for a Florentine audience, when he recounted his story, and indicated the difficulties it presented, and referred his hearers for further explanation to three of their own citizens, Frescobaldi, Andrea, and Perrini; who, as well as Dante's wife, were all probably alive and resident in Florence: an observation that also applies, at least in part, to the writer of the Riccardi M. S. In the second place, there are many ways of accounting for the total disappearance of the imperfect Cantos. Fres-

the Vita Nuova — that is, prior to his twenty-sixth year, much more prior to his exile. Nothing but what had been meditated for a long period could have been called *maximus labor*. Benvenuti adds: sed non sine magno labore resumpsit altam phantasiam. Id. Id.

(1) Onde Dante, confortato dal Marchese, ripigliò il Capitolo nel modo scritto disopra. Bib. Ricc. M. S. ut supra.

cobaldi might have torn them up as worse than useless, when he received from Malaspina that perfect copy, which he had requested might be sent him on the poem's being terminated; or he might have corrected the imperfect Cantos, according to the perfect (1). But there is no setting aside so circumstantial a recital as is given. It is then entitled to a place among other antiquarian trifles; but why its authenticity should ever have been keenly disputed can be well accounted for only from the propensity, which some have, to swell motes into beams. To the Marquis Malaspina, as we are told, the Canticle of Purgatory was dedicated; but the Purgatory must have been written, at earliest, after the Author had left Lunigiana (2): the Canticle Hell is said to have been dedicated to Uguccione della Faggiola, who was Podestà of Arezzo when Dante escaped thither from Rome (3); so that this compliment also dates subsequently (by at least 4 years) to Dante's final departure from the person he compliments. Wherefore, when we find the Paradise

(1) Compiuto che fosse, pregò che adoperasse ch'egli l'avesse. Bib. Ricc. M. S. ut supra. Indeed the disappearance of those seven Cantos is no stranger, than that of all of Dante's autographical writings. Of these scarcely any are extant: whereas of Petrarch's and of Boccaccio's there are several. The present Marquis Malaspina has a multitude of ancient documents in his archives. His collection if accurately examined (which would be a laborious undertaking) might, perhaps, furnish some specimens of the hand-writing of Dante.

(2) He did so to go to Verona. Hell, Comment, Canto I. p. 45. — Pelli, Mem. ec. p. 100.

(3) In 1302. He soon sought Pistoja. Hell, Comment, Canto VI. p. 366.

dedicated to Can, after the poet had abandoned Verona for ever (1): and when we learn that the entire Divine Comedy was dedicated to Frederick III of Sicily (2); a sovereign to whom its Author was once ambassador, but whom, during his exile, he must only for a very short time have visited, if he did so at all: — such considerations imply, that our poet never dedicated a part of his great poem to any one to whom he left the power of repaying his homage by hospitality or any other vulgar reward. Indeed as to Faggiola and Can, the thing is yet more striking: for his dedications to them were made, not only after he had left them, but after he had been obliged to leave them by

(1) Concerning the close of the Divine Comedy, there is some fable. One of Dante's sons imagined his father's ghost appeared to him, and showed him the secret drawer in which the last thirteen Cantos of Paradise were to be found. This might have been a sick fancy of the young man; or at worst an invention of filial devotion. It however clearly proves, that the Cantos in question were posthumously published. The composition of Paradise then occupied the last years of Dante, and these he past in Ravenna. In Ravenna therefore he wrote the dedication of Paradise. Indeed as the poem (at least the whole of it) was not sent to Can before Dante's death, it is most probable Dante had never sent him the dedication, though composed and ready to be sent; and this suggestion of mine is much strengthened by the fact of the dedication being without a date, though in the form of a letter; while all the other letters which we have of Dante are scrupulously dated.

(2) This is the way to take all discordance from Boccaccio's words; without blaming him, as Pelli does (Mem. ec. p. 144). Boccaccio says (Vita di Dante p. 259), Paradise was dedicated to Frederick; and the whole Divine Comedy, to Can. Either Boccaccio wrote one thing for another, in the hurry of composition; or his copiers, in copying. He must have known Paradise was dedicated to Can; for he had seen the dedication, and translated it, verbatim. Hell, Comment, Canto I. p. 63.

their own ill-treatment of him. How much he had to complain of the latter, I have already shown: and as to the former, a contemporary chronicler affirms, that his conduct became so indecent towards all the *White* refugees, that they found themselves constrained to quit Arezzo; adding, that the corrupt change was produced by the delusive hope of having his son made Cardinal by Dante's implacable foe, Boniface VIII (1). I may therefore repeat my former words, that, 'with an admirable spirit of independence Dante shrunk from owing any thing to men, from whom he had experienced unkindness, and whom he was determined never to revisit; and so repaid a hundredfold whatever favours had been received from them, by attaching their names in front of Canticles of his immortal work (2).'

B. —— VII.

'So I, turning to the sea of all wisdom' is the text; and it is a bold and most *Dantesque* manner of designating Virgil. Indeed the variety of appellations which he is given is a distinguishing trait of the Divine Comedy. No writer of verse or prose

(1) Corrotto da vana speranza datagli da Papa Bonifazio di fare uno suo figliuolo Cardinale, fece loro tante ingiurie che loro convenne partirsi. Dino Compagni, Lib. 2. p. 50. — Recollect, Dante was one of their chief Governors; so he must have had a full share of the Podesta's injustice. The *White* Chiefs staid only a few weeks in Arezzo.

(2) Lell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 50.

in any language (not even Mr. Gibbon) rivals its fertility in this particular (1).

C. —— XIX.

The fable of Phlegyas in Polytheism, and the beautiful story of the sacrifice of Isaac in the Hebrew law, were intended (however dissimilar in their modes and merits) to convey a similar moral —— unqualified obedience to Providence. For a most loving father to slay with his own hand his young, innocent, lovely boy, were at least as heart-rending as to submit to the violation of a daughter. The Pagans selected the latter example; and if the Bible, which preferred the former, represented it as put into execution too, we might for once hold, that, of the two creeds, Paganism seemed to display the milder spirit. Our religion vindicates its usual superiority of chaste feeling. Phlegyas was a king of Thessaly, whose child was ravished by Apollo; on which the repining father revenged himself in the only way he could devise against a Celestial, and set fire to the Temple at Delphos —— perhaps hoping to starve the Deity (as Aristophanes profanely declared might be) by depriving him of the fume of altar offerings (2).

(1) Mr. Cary, as afraid of the boldness of the expression, replaces it with the common-place one — "turning to the *deep source of knowledge.*" Yet mar di tutto 'l senno has, I know not what of peculiar poignancy; which a literal version best conveys.

(2) The same conclusion follows from the theories of Jerome and Origen; who held the Pagan Deities to be bad angels. Hell, Comment. Canto III. p. 179. Note.

But Apollo shot him dead for his temerity; and his soul was hurled to the Tartarean abyss, as an admonition to man that true justice is not what appears such in his eyes, but what is ordained by the Divinity:

Phlegyasque miserrimus omnes
Admonet, et magnâ testatur voce per umbras:
Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere Divos (1).

(1) Aeneid. Lib. vi. v. 618. — I know that both a French wit and the Bishop of Gloucester objected to this exclamation of Phlegyas; and that the Bishop employed it as a prop to his hypothesis — an hypothesis that melts away before plain sense. "In the midst of his torments" (Gibbon, Miscellaneous Works, Vol. iv. p. 510) "the unfortunate Phlegyas preaches justice and piety, like Ixion in Pindar. A very useful piece of advice, says the French buffoon, for those who were already damned to all eternity:

Cette sentence est bonne et belle:
Mais en enfer, de quoi sert-elle?

From this judicious piece of criticism his lordship argues, that Phlegyas was preaching not to the dead, but to the living: and that Virgil is only describing the mimic Tartarus, which was exhibited at Eleusis for the instruction of the initiated. I shall transcribe one or two of the reasons, which Dr. Jortin condescends to oppose to Scarron's criticism. 'To preach to the damned, says he, is labour in vain. And what if it is? This admonition, as far as it relates to himself and his companions in misery, is not so much as an admonition to mend, as a bitter sarcasm, etc. It is labour in vain. But in the poetical system it seems to have been the occupation of the damned to labour in vain.'" That Dante, though living in the age of the love of allegory and indeed rather over-inclined to it himself, never does Virgil the injustice of attributing to him any other allegorical project, than that of inculcating the doctrine of the religion of his time as to futurity, by the imagery with which that religion was conversant, I have said elsewhere. (Hell, Comment, Canto iii. p. 162.) Aeneas's descent to the shades was in Dante's opinion intended to appear as real as any poetic fiction can be. Whence to the tenderness and sublimity of poetry, is added most interesting information as to the creed of Paganism. What would it all shrink to under the Warburtonian process? But it is a hopeless cause. Warburton and Scarron; against Gibbon, Jortin, and Dante!

How frigid and repulsive is this, to the parable of Genesis! The destruction of a costly edifice, even the poetical recollections awakened by 'Smintheus of the silver bow' are tame and weak, in comparison with such a sublime appeal to the best and warmest feelings of our nature —— the parental. Yet both inculcate the same lesson —— entire submission to the divine dispensations, from a firm conviction that they must be equitable. Phlegyas was punished for vain resistance; Abraham rewarded for all-confiding deference. It may at first sight appear the prime defect of the fable of Paganism, that Apollo, and not the supreme Divinity is the acting power: but, in truth, it is chiefly defective not on this score, but on that of the coldness with which it applies to our affections. It is a reproach to which every part of the Pagan worship is liable, that of being too susceptible of misconstruction and of consequently giving easily rise to gross superstitions among the vulgar —— superstitions, which (as I have said in the words of Dante (1)) neither the founders of that worship, nor any of its enlightened professors ever intended. If by Apollo was understood one of the minor Deities, these were no more than subordinate ministers in the Platonic creed, as Angels are in ours; and an instructed Roman should not have heard with more admiration of Apollo working the

(1) Comment, Canto VII. p. 441.

will of the Great First Cause, than a Christian of it's being an Angel of the Lord, not the Lord himself, who arrested the sacrifice which the Lord in person had commanded — "GOD did tempt Abraham and said unto him Abraham... take thy son, thy only son, Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering.... and Abraham bound Isaac... and laid him on the altar, and took the knife to slay him ... and the *Angel* of Lord called out to him... Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, etc. (1)." Or, if a Pagan preferred attaching his mind to no secondary intelligence, but to the universal Jehovah — to no Angel or Deity of the Lord, but the Lord himself — there was nothing to prevent his doing so; for Macrobius has shown at length, that Apollo, or the sun, was frequently employed as one of the many synonimes which have served in various times and countries to designate one and the same Being (maximus Jupiter), the king of Gods (Rex Deorum), the Parent of all things divine as well as human (2). It is not in its substance, but manner (ill calculated to attain its end of bettering mankind), that the story of Phlegyas and Apollo is open to criticism; and marks, as clearly as any passage of which I am aware, the immense superiority of the Biblical over the Heathen doctors. For here is the self-same thesis exemplified by each of them according to their peculiar genius

(1) Genesis, XXII, 1-19.
(2) Eundem esse Jovem ac Solem claris docetur indiciis. Sat. l. 1. c. 23.

— by *these* in a manner that shocks, and by *those* that softens the heart: by *these* with a tale of rashness, revenge and sacrilege, of the violation of a virgin (which it required an effort of the understanding to convince men was not unholy, because ordained by heaven) and of the exasperation and eternal punishment of her father; the justice of which punishment, and the injustice of which exasperation could only be drawn from a metaphysical process too fine for popular comprehensions: and by *those* with a drama of most gratifying pathos, whose catastrophe was the dispersion of every fear and the crowning of every hope. What more venerably moving, than Abraham's unruffled faith and tenderness? — "and Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac, his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together." I know of no scene more profoundly affecting. And when the juvenile victim, with a look of soul-reposing, filial devotion, interrogates his hoary sire, who but sheds a tender tear? "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, my father: and he said, here I am my son. And he said, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Has another mortal dramatist ever represented a parent in a situation more truly pathetic? Or can any thing be conceived more touchingly sublime, than the inly-bleeding parent's simple response? — "My son, God will himself

provide a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them together." "Abraham" (said the Apostle) "relying on the divine promise, that in Isaac his seed should be called, accounted that God could raise him up even from the dead (1)." So Abraham, having built the altar, and bound his son, stretched out his hand with the knife to slay him, when the Angel interposed: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; I will in blessing bless thee, and multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand on the sea-shore."

If Dante uses here the feebler of these stories (to mark the flagitious nature of that anger which would attempt vain resistance to Omnipotence) we ought to observe, that he could not have introduced Abraham in hell; and that in availing himself of the other, he was incited by that tolerant, classic spirit, which (as I have repeatedly shown) engaged him to employ willingly the theological allegories of Antiquity. Virgil had made Phlegyas terrify by his own tortures: Dante makes him a teacher quite as effectual, by making him bear away the condemned souls to torture. Charon ferries them into hell; Phlegyas seizes on the worst portion, and hurries them down the hell of hells, the depths of Tartarus.

(1) Hebrews, xi, 18—19.

D. —— XXX.

. . . . Gemuit sub pondere cymba
Sutilis (1).

E. —— XLV.

Boccaccio, citing Solomon, to prove that the more excellent and wise a virtuous man is, the more easily he is stirred up to noble indignation, adds that it was with reference to that text Dante used the epithet *disdainful* here (2). The Imolese says: 'Blest be the womb that bore thee' (Benedetta colei, che 'n te s' incinse) was not a fortuitous exclamation, but a tribute of respect from Dante to his mother; who was truly *beatified* and had a name expressive of her worth —— Gemma (3).' Dante's *wife* we know was called *Gemma* Donati: but there is legal proof that his *mother's* name was *Bella* (4). Either then the Imolese made a slight error, and confused the mother with her daughter-in-law; or the former must have borne the two names. If her title was really *Madonna Gemma Bella*, there was double ground for vaunting. If

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 413.

(2) Comento, vol. 2. p. 78.

(3) Heic nota, Lector, quod mater Dantis fuit verè beata. Vocata est enim *Gemma*, et tanquam gemma pretiosa misit lucem in mundum. Benvenuti Im. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. Vol. I. p. 1043.

(4) . . . . Dominæ *Bellæ matris* dicti Dantis . . . et Dominæ *Gemmæ* nunc viduæ, sed olim *uxoris* dicti Dantis, et filiæ D. Manetti de Donatis, etc. ap. Pelli, Mem. ec. p. 28.

such a tender sentiment as filial piety dictated this verse, that tenderness is rendered still more striking from the severity of all the rest of the passage, and is an instance of those strong contrasts which our poet very often employs with success. That this tribute to the maternal shade is short, and as it were casual, and intended to be concealed from every one's consciousness but his own, accords perfectly with the reserve which the whole poem displays respecting its Author's domestic concerns: for his name is to be found in it but once, and then its insertion is excused with a plea of necessity; and when he introduced into it three of his female friends, we have seen them so enveloped in allegory as to be almost disguised from the public eye, not obtruded on it (1).

F. —— IX.

This fierce burst of exultation is rendered fiercer from its being a mis-application of the words which religion had consecrated to joy and harmony. They were poured forth by the angelic chorus who announced to the shepherds the birth of our Saviour —— "Glory be to God, etc. (2)." In more violent contrast still is what follows —— the shrieking out of the victim's name, and his turning his teeth against himself. It must, in great part, have been such passages, that obtained popularity

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 152.
(2) Luke II. 14.

for poetry, whose learning and condensity of mind seem adapted to but few readers. The meanest of the people knew a quantity of Dante verses by heart, and sung them up and down Italy. No poet's fame ever spread so quickly; for as fast as the Cantos of his poem were published, they appear to have got amongst all classes of the people, the lowest as well as the highest. Thus, we are informed that this discourse took place between two poor women in Verona, as he passed one day under their windows: — "See!" (cried one) "See the man who goes down and brings us news from Hell." "Indeed" (replied her companion, with simplicity) "and sore marks he bears of it too; observe how pale he looks, with his hair frizzled, for all the world as if it had been scorched." Dante overheard them, and is said to have smiled: an infrequent occurrence with him; for his temperament disposed him to melancholy, and, if we credit biographers, he was never seen to laugh out.

G. — LXIV.

'Messer Filippo Argenti degli Adimari' (says the Riccardian M. S.) 'was a man of gigantic stature, dark complexion, and violent passions; and he was named Argenti, because, being very rich and as unbridled in his expenses as in his choler, he he had his horse, a beautiful animal in which he took great pride, shod on one occasion with silver' — it fece ferare *d'argento*. M. Ginguenè professes

not to comprehend, why an individual so slightly distinguished should have been selected by Dante for condemnation. But the reason was the same which I pointed out when speaking of Ciacco. In this *fifth* Circle *anger* is punished, not the nefarious crimes which it too often causes; in the same way as in the *third* Circle *intemperance* is so, and not any of those lamentable excesses to which it generally leads. Argenti was chosen, because he was of a dangerous brutal impetuosity; which however had never betrayed him into any iniquity of the deepest colour, but many eccentric breaches of decorum. That ungovernable anger is at every time a wretched foible, and was peculiarly so, in a town so ripe for discord as Florence, requires no elucidation; and Argenti, in giving way to it, was perhaps as interiorly and truly guilty as men who had been led by the same passion into deeds of more apparent ferocity, than any attributed to him. But poets (as well as legislators) are to pronounce on *ostensible* grounds. Dante was then most happy in his selection of Ciacco and Argenti to exemplify the odiousness of intemperance and choler, even when uncontaminated by those direr atrocities to which they almost invariably lead. Perhaps Florence never since Dante's day, possessed a counterpart for Argenti; —— a character noted for so much ire, and yet unaccused of any desperate malefaction. The wretch's biting himself is an idea repeated, by Dante in his version of the Psalms

E per dolore se medesmo morde (1).

Argenti is the hero of one of Boccaccio's tales (2); in substance —— Messer Ciacco (who, it is probable, was the same in Canto VI) and Biondello, two Florentine gentlemen, meeting in the fish-market, Biondello, who had just purchased two fine lampreys, told Ciacco (what was not true) that they were for the Chief of the *Blacks*, Corso Donati. So to him the jocund Ciacco took care to go the next day, in expectation of a splendid dinner. He found there neither company nor lampreys, but a very sorry meal; so, perceiving the jest, he vowed retaliation. Some days afterwards he therefore called a porter, and giving him a flask, told him to go with it to M. Argenti and say —— that 'he was sent by Biondello, to have it *rubinated* with some of his best wine, seeing Messer Filippo Argenti was universally reputed an excellent bottle-painter.' The porter did as he was ordered; keeping beyond the reach of Argenti's arm, which irritated him to madness. In the mean time Ciacco setting out in quest of Biondello, informed him, that his friend, Messer Filippo Argenti, was inquiring for him with sollicitude. Hence a ludicrous, but savage catastrophe. Both hastening to meet, one eagerly inquisitive, and the other boiling with rage at what he had interpreted a gross insult, little Biondello was kicked and cuffed

(1) I sette Salmi di D. A. 1. 6.
(2) Il Decamerone, Giorn. IX Nov. 8.

through the street, at such an unmerciful rate and so dragged through the kennel, by his gigantick ferocious antagonist, who continued vociferating, 'I'll *rubinate* you,' that if it had not been for the interference of a crowd, he had been murdered. This story was no fiction; but, like many of the *Novelle*, was a real event that happened in Florence a very short time before Dante's exile (1). It most naturally recurred to him then to mention Argenti: and perhaps the more so (for who reprehends not more willingly the failings of his enemies, than his friends?) that Argenti belonged to a family, the Adimari, to whose enmity Sacchetti ascribes in a great degree Dante's exile (2).

(1) So Benvenuti tells us — paulo ante expulsionem auctoris. Perhaps the whole is yet more amusing in his quaint Latin, than in Boccaccio's beautifully measured prose . . . Argenti stabat totus turbatus, et rodebat se ipsum in animo, existimans quod Blondellus ad postam alicujus fecisset sibi hanc truffam . . . Erat corpore magnus, fortis, et nervosus, iracundus, et indignans, et dedit illi cum pugno magnum ictum in faciem . . . Quid est hoc? quid est hoc? . . . Proditor, bene videbis quid est hoc. Quare *rubinare* mittis tu ad me? Bene *rubinabo* te . . . et, abjecto caputio, fulminabat manu et linguâ super eum . . . Omne dixerunt quod fatuè egerat Blondellus mittendo D. Philippo Argenti ribaldum cum flasco et truffis, quia bene debebat scire quod D. Philippus non erat homo mottezandus. ap. Mur. Antiq. Ital. Vol. I. 1043.

(2) Dante had one of the youths of that family severely fined, for prancing on horseback, and holding out his legs so widely, as to be a serious annoyance to the more tranquil passengers, particularly those on foot: — nor was such a slight annoyance at that wild period, when the narrow streets of Florence were barricaded, and full of armed men both horse and foot; and when the city, in fine, was so far more populous than at present. Yet this action of Dante is said to have been *sole* cause for the hatred of the Adimari; and a *principal* one for the subsequent exile of Dante, under pretence of his being a *White*.

The city, which Dante '*unbars*' (sbarro) his eyes to see, is named Dis after the Aeneid: perque domos *Ditis:* (1) and it forms as it were a great division in Tartarus; for up to this moment, both the inflictions and the guilt which earned them are bearable if compared with the horrid spectacles to be found after passing within its walls. To this city, and not to any of the portions of Hell which we have yet traversed, Boccaccio was of opinion that the scroll above the gate of the Vestibule particularly referred (2); and however that be (for my own opinion is that it applies to all within the Hell-of-the-damned, which begins with the second Circle), yet this much is certain, that in all the future Circles we shall discover no mild offenders like poor Francesca or Ciacco, or even Argenti; but perpetrators of the most enormous wickedness. The *minarets* and walls glowing at a distance remind one of the Aeneid (the specification of minarets, instead of turrets, being nothing more than for the purpose of giving a profaner turn to the passage, not of throwing a slur on

The *chief* cause was his withstanding Charles de Valois (Hell, Comment, Canto VI. p. 363): but the enmity of so powerful a family as the Adimari was no slight adjunct. *Questo essendo la principal cagione, da ivi a poco fu per Bianco cacciato da Firenze.* Franco Sacchetti, Nov. 114.

(1) Aeneid. Lib. VI. v. 268.

(2) Per me si va nella Città dolente — *cioé nella città di Dite.* Boccaccio, Comento, Vol. I. p. 138.

CANTO VIII.

any religion, which would be entirely out of Dante's way:

Respicit Aeneas subitò, et sub rupe sinistrâ
Mœnia lata videt triplici circumdata muro,
Quæ rapidus flammis ambit torrentibus amnis (1).

I. —— LXXXIII.

The fallen, or 'heaven-showered' angels, who are now the demons that guard Dis, were once (as we shall learn presently) the guards of the hellish Vestibule: from whose gate they were dislodged, on the descent of Jesus into the first, or Elysian circle of hell.

K. —— XCIII.

The indignation of the fiends is directed entirely against Dante; or at least no otherwise against Virgil (who being a spirit was not an intruder) than as the guide of a Mortal. There is severe irony in telling Dante to '*retrace*' his steps '*alone*'; not merely because it were hard for him to find the road, but because of the impossibility of retracing it whether alone or in company. That it was impossible, seems to have been the notion entertained by the Roman as well as the Tuscan: so we find Aeneas and the Sybil go from one new scene to another, and at last, without turning back, emerge by a different door-way than that by which

(1) Aeneid. Lib. vi. v. 548.

they had entered; and as to Virgil and Dante, they are to traverse the interior of the earth right forward, and come out at the antipodes.

L. —— CII.

What I translate '*oft*', is in the original '*more than seven times*' —— words which some expounders (I think neither very naturally or poetically) would make not an indefinite number, but an exact specification (yet certainly no very *exact* one) of nine distinct perils, which Dante had hitherto affronted —— the panther, lion, wolf, Charon, Minos, Cerberus, Plutus, Phlegyas, and Argenti.

M. —— CV.

The *rede*, or counsel which directed their unearthly journey (da tal n'è dato) was manifestly that recounted by Virgil in Canto the second: counsel, which he had affirmed proceeded from three saints, once Dante's mortal mistresses; one of whom was certainly intended for an immortal personification of *supreme Philosophy*, and the others, probably, for *Mercy* and *Grace* (1).

N. —— CXVII.

The words whispered to the infernal Cherubim were, it is presumable, the same which had been

(1) Hell, Comment, Canto II. p. 153.

addressed with such an effect to Charon, Minos, and Phlegyas — an assertion of the will and omnipotence of the Deity; and in now conveying them in a whisper, the poet shows much sublimity of judgment: for by this veil of mystery he is enabled to represent the fiends as rejecting with disdainful hardihood that solemn invocation, and at the same time to preserve all its force and solemnity. These could scarcely have escaped undiminished, had it been openly exposed to rejection (1). Perhaps even the invocation, instead of being enfeebled in our recollection, (which would have been the necessary consequence of noisy altercation) is invested by this obscurity with additional grandeur. Milton is reported to have studied closely the parliamentary orators of his day, and to have faithfully delineated their peculiarities in the debates of his Pandemonium. That he whom he imitated frequently, Dante, did similarly in his Divine Comedy may be; but it must have only been in those short exclamatory phrases, which occur occasionally — at least if we may judge of the speeches of the Florentine leaders, by what remains of them. Cer-

(1) This blind fury and recklesness of the damned must remind us of the Miltonic Moloch:

What fear we then? What doubt we to incense
His utmost ire?... We are at worst
On this side nothing.....
And with perpetual inroads can alarm,
Though inaccessible, his fatal throne:
Which if not victory, is yet revenge.
Parad. Lost, Book 2.

tainly the remnants of their speeches are few; but they suffice to give an idea of their manner, because we know them to be authentic. Dino Compagni (who was one of the chief political men of the day, deeply engaged in the Government of Florence) has himself left us parts of his own orations and of those of his companions. Short yet confused, in the very lowest style of colloquial asseveration, nothing can be more unhappily devoid of any thing approaching to eloquence. Certainly it is beyond calculation immense, the distance between them and the diffusive energy and majesty, which Dante displays so very often in all his prose works, whether Latin or Italian. In his Vita Nuova, his Convito, and his Monarchia we find passages utterly astonishing when compared with Dino Compagni. It was then most justly that Dante's eloquence was rated so high in his time, and that its force enabled him to succeed in the generality of his many embassies. His manner also (without speaking) appears to have possessed something of gentle gravity, which was very attractive; and conciliated his audience, before a word had fallen from a voice said to have been of singular sweetness. The interview between him and Ilarius, as recounted by that monk himself, impresses one with the truth of this remark. After Dante had finished the first Canticle of his poem, or Hell, that is, after he left Malaspina, he passed by the monastery of Corvo, on his way, it would ap-

pear, to Verona; whither, as I have often repeated, he went in 1308. He seems at that period to have been wandering without a single attendant. 'He was on his road to cross the Appennines' (writes Ilarius) 'when, either through respect to the place, or from some other motive, he entered our cloisters. Neither I, nor any of my brother friars knew who he was. So, I asked him what he wanted. He replied not a word, appearing to be wholly intent on observing the architecture of the building. I spoke to him a second time, to learn what he wanted. He then turned round, and, seeing so many friars with me, answered PEACE. This made me but the more curious to know who it could be. And taking him by the hand I led him aside; and then I learned that he was a man with whose face indeed I was unacquainted, but whom I had long known by reputation. When he perceived I was so entirely attracted by his manner and affectionately melted by his accents, he drew forth from his bosom a little book, and, with the most friendly courtesy handing it to me, said: Here is a part of my Work, which you have probably never seen. I give it to you to keep in memory of me. After I had pressed the little volume to my heart, as a dear thing, I opened it; and, in his presence, began to look over it with fond feelings. And seeing it was not in Latin, but in the vulgar tongue, I suppose I betrayed a look of surprise; for he asked me why I stopped. I answered that I was astonished

at the language: for it appeared to me a wondrous difficulty to treat so arduous a theme in the dialect of the vulgar; and even scarcely proper that so mighty a production should be attired in the garb of the populace. To this he replied verbatim thus: what you think is very just. Know even, that when the first seeds of this poem (which were, perhaps, infused in my mind by heaven) began to spring up, I did not fail to select the idiom which is best adapted to my theme: nor did I only select it in idea, but actually began to compose my verses in it, thus:

Ultima regna canam, etc. (1)

But when I considered better the state of the present age, and saw how neglected lie the compositions of the most illustrious Latin poets; and that on this account people of rank, for whom in happier ages such writings were composed, have (and with grief I say it) thrown aside the liberal arts,

(1) These are precisely the same that are given by Boccaccio too in his Vita di Dante, as was noticed before (Hell, Comment, Canto 1. p. 11). There is then no doubt but such was the beginning of his version; and not any other. How far Dante went on with this his Latin version, we do not know: only three lines of it are in print. May I avow (with the most profound respect) that these three lines do not make me much desire to see any more? The same reasons, here given to Ilarius for not writing in Latin, are given still more at length in the Convito. John de Virgilio (so named from his supposed resemblance to Virgil) blames Dante much for condescending to write in Italian — nec preme Castalias indignâ veste sorores: and Dante in his reply mildly vindicates his own choice, and probably with the less force, because he did not chuse to displease his friend, John; who seems to have been inflated with pretensions to Latinity. Ecl. 1. Johannis de Virgilio — Id. Dantis. ap. Dionisi, Aneddoti, No. IV.

and left them to others of plebeian birth; I quickly renounced the little lyre on which I had begun to strike with some confidence, and prepared for myself this other more adapted to the ears of modern gentlemen. For it is in vain to offer solid food to infants that are at the nurse's breast (1).'

O. —— CXXVII.

Virgil is supposed to allude not to any of the fabulous descents of antiquity, but to that of our Saviour when he came to lead away the 'original man' and his companions, as before remembered in Canto the fourth. I may add, that the resistance of the demons at the entrance of hell on that occasion, their impotent attempt to stop the Redeemer at the gate whose scroll we read in the vestibule, his breaking of that gate and the 'rifting of its hinges' (senza serrame) —— all recall a homily of S. Austin's: Christus ad inferna descendit; legiones Principis mortis perturbavit; portam inferni et vectos ferreos confregit; et omnes justos absolvit (2). A celebrated Catholic Theologian, with whose works Dante was most familiar, had held (as I remarked formerly (3)) that our Saviour went no lower in hell, than the first circle; ever since which event, the worst portion of the retreat-

(1) Ap. Laur. Mehus. Vita Ambr. Camald. p. 321. — Dionisi, Saggio di Critica, ec. p. 23.

(2) Op. Lib. 3. cap. 24.

(3) Hell, Comment, Canto IV. p. 243.

ed fiends are described by Dante as keeping hold in Dis; —— a city, I repeat, that makes a kind of great division in Tartarus; for the circles within its wall, although they continue deepening in horrors as they descend to the central pit, are all of them incalculably more horrific than any thing that lies outside. Virgil then says, that the fiends' reckless audacity is not new; for that they displayed it once against Messiah himself at the gate of the Vestibule which still lies broken down —— the gate over which was seen the deadly scroll. The introduction of Phlegyas, followed closely by this allusion to the Messiah's adorable victory, is among the abundant instances that prove the co-existence of the Christian and the Pagan symbols of belief in Dante's mind, whenever he composed poetry. This union of the imagery of Christianity and Polytheism, forms the one primary hue in which he dipt the whole woof of his creations, whatever other bright colours he intended to disperse here and there over it. His commentator may therefore merit pardon, if, in anxiety to impress this truth, he should fall into repetitions. It is the fine thread which guides through all the varied mazes, and into the most secret recesses, and up to the fountain-head of Dante's poetry; it is the only light in which his pictures can be distinguished completely, exhibiting their multifarious groups in perfect harmony; it is the cup, of which he who has not quaffed will find little in the Divine

Comedy but confusion and extravagance —— incongruous metaphors to deck still more incongruous opinions, and a perpetual medley of pedantry and superstition.

P. —— CXXX.

This approach of the Angel who is to force the entrance of Dis (for such we shall find him) brings to recollection that of Raphael:

> Eastward among those trees, what glorious shape
> Comes this way moving (1)!

Yet the passage in Dante may be interpreted in two ways: either the Angel is for an instant visible on the skirt of one of the upper circles, as he is descending, and is lost to sight in the obscurity of the lower ones; or Virgil predicts what he is only conscious of, without seeing it. This latter is the common interpretation; but the former is the more picturesque, and, in my mind, the true one —— always recollecting that the 'celestial messenger' after that momentary apparition, becomes again invisible. In his viewless approaching we have the Aeneid:

> At Venus obscuro gradientes aëre sæpsit,
> Et multo nebulæ circùm Dea fudit amictu,
> Cernere ne quis eos . . . (2).

(1) Paradise Lost, Book v.
(2) Lib. I. v. 411.

END OF VOL. I.

ERRATA

in a few copies:

PAGE 31 *for* lupinar *read* lupanar.
50 *for* independance *read* independence.
483 *for* witheld *read* withheld.
484 *for* vere *read* verè.
486 *for* comparison *read* companion.
487 *for* intemperence *read* intemperance.

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